The results of a study conducted at the New York University College of Dentistry seem to confirm the hypothesis that the use of oral bisphosphonate is connected to dental implant failure. In the case-control study, more than 300 middle-aged female patients with failed dental implants were compared with women from the same age group whose implants were still intact.

Clinical evaluations at the Department of Periodontology and Implant Dentistry were conducted between 1997 and late 2004. According to the researchers, the clinical data gathered from these examinations showed that in women whose implants had failed the odds of having taken bisphosphonate orally were almost three times higher. Dental implant failure related to the use of oral bisphosphonate also seemed to be more likely to occur in the maxilla.

Neither the quantity nor the duration of bisphosphonate use was evaluated. Although the risk of implant failure is low, the researchers concluded that oral bisphosphonate could pose a risk to the success of dental implant therapy and should be prescribed with caution.

Earlier research on the association remains ambiguous, as results from Sweden and Australia have not found increased risks for implant failure when bisphosphonate was taken by patients before or after implant placement. However, the majority of clinical organisations still recommend that long-term users stop taking bisphosphonate before undergoing dental implant procedures to avoid complications.

Several morphometric studies have proven sexual dimorphisms in human teeth, for example that women's teeth are smaller than men's teeth. The German Society for Sex-Specific Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery recently reported on a study that found no obvious differences between male and female teeth.

Headed by Prof. Ralf J. Radlanski from the Centre for Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery at the Benjamin Franklin Campus of Charité Universitätsmedizin Berlin, the researchers explored whether the sex of an individual could be identified if only the front teeth were considered. This was tested by having participants evaluate 50 images of the anterior oral region of men and women aged between seven and 75. The lip area was not shown.

The participants included dentists, dental technicians, dental students and dental professionals, as well as 50 people who had no professional dental background.

The results overall demonstrated that sex could be detected in only about 50 per cent of the images. Although there are anthropological studies that claim to prove measurable morphometric differences, the study proved that those are not even visible to experts' eyes.

While some tooth positions were correctly assigned by 70 per cent of the participants, others were wrongly assigned by the same number of participants. The assumption that women tend to have rounded teeth and men rather angular ones could not be confirmed by the study. Furthermore, contrary to what was expected by many of the participants, shape, size and colour of the canines were not meaningful indicators of sex.

"In everyday practice, it is relevant whether the restoration fits the patient's face but not whether the patient is male or female," Radlanski said. "Recognisable typical male teeth or female teeth do not exist."