

Future Trends in Implant Dentistry

15 Sep 2015 Michael Tischler, DDS

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Welcome to the inaugural month of *Dentistry Today's* dedicated implant section entitled *Implants Today*. As implant editor for *Dentistry Today*, my goal is to create a monthly venue based on a dedicated topic in implant dentistry. Editor-in-chief Dr. Damon Adams and I have assembled advisory board members who represent the best in implant dentistry. These advisory board members will be submitting articles in this monthly section throughout the year, adding their expertise to the topic at hand. Another goal of this section is to highlight pertinent continuing education venues for our readers, and also to involve relevant manufacturer partners who will introduce and advertise products that can bring greater success to your practice.

This month we are focusing on future trends in implant dentistry. We have Dr. Michael Pikos offering a brief but informative interview to share his views on this. As you read Dr. Pikos' interview, it becomes clearly evident that the future of implant dentistry has potential for continued growth on many levels.

The demographics alone boldly indicate that the need for dental implants will increase due to the baby boomer segment of the population. This group is, better than any other, beginning to understand the advantages of dental implants and how they can benefit from this treatment. The years of evolution of dental implant science, thanks to pioneers such as my mentor, Dr. Carl Misch, and many other clinicians and researchers, have brought the success rate for dental implants to a level not seen when compared to other prosthetic replacements in the human body. This 95% industry-wide success rate often touted for dental implants has created a bold confidence for patients knowing that dental implants are here to stay as the foundation for tooth replacement. In my own practice, patients now present to us requesting dental implants; 20 years ago, it was an entirely different situation. This trend for increased acceptance for implants will only improve as the success rate increases even more throughout time. Now is the time to educate and involve more general practitioners in this exciting treatment arena to meet the increased patient demand.

We feel another trend for implant dentistry is going to be in making this ideal treatment modality more financially available for patients. There seems to be a slow trend of more insurance companies covering some implant procedures for patients, as compared to 5 years ago. This is most likely based on the widespread success of dental implants and the various prosthetic options. Our hope is that insurance companies see the long-term clinical benefits of implant treatment translating to actuarial decisions that further implant coverage for patients. Another avenue to enable patients to accept implant-based treatment are the various finance companies available. With the option of third-party financing, a patient can make payments over time, allowing the practitioner to be paid, minus a finance fee. When more complex and higher-cost treatment plans are presented, this outside financing, combined with maximizing a patient's insurance benefits, often makes sense from a practice management standpoint.

A large part of implant dentistry's success during the past 20 years has been on increased technology on many levels. The core technological success platform has been the advance of computer technology. Improved technology, advancements in educational venues, and communication have allowed for better sharing of knowledge within the implant field. This includes not only improved research available via

the Internet, but also better audiovisual presentations and web-based venues that allow clinicians to present their knowledge. As Dr. Pikos points out in his interview, this trend will only continue as time progresses as education is leading toward virtual training.

Behind the future of implant dentistry will be the continued growth of CT imaging technology and integration with other adjunctive technologies that complement it. The merging of digital photo imaging with hard-tissue CT data that leads to prosthetically driven CT guides is an example of this merging of technology that is currently being used. This merging of technologies is furthered when prosthetically driven implant guides then lead to CAD/CAM milled prosthetics such as a zirconia implant bridge and other newer engineered nanoceramics and acrylics. The integration of accurate optical scanning of scanning jigs that create CAD/CAM milled abutments even further this entire digital workflow. The end result of this digital workflow is safer treatment with improved prosthetic success and predictability. As this improves, even greater success and predictability is expected in the future.

The future trends in implant dentistry, as a surgical and prosthetic part of dental treatment, are very bright. The demographics, proven success rate, financial treatment accessibility, and technological aspects that are available show a very positive trend. It will be interesting as we revisit this topic each September in this section to see how this trend continues. I look forward to this opportunity to steward this section and to share my passion for implant dentistry.

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