

## **Editorial**

### **An Introduction to a Philosophy: Success with Implants and Implant Related Therapies**

In recent years, in spite of efforts on our part to provide our fellow professionals with the resources to successfully work over the implants that we would place for them, not every dentist that we work with has had consistently positive experiences with the restorative phase of treatment. In recognition of this wide range of relative success with implant restorations, we have come to develop a philosophy with respect to implant continuing education that has one broad goal: To provide support and education to enhance the success of every practice and professional that we work with.

So where to start? There's so much out there: Immediate placement – Immediate Loading – Platform Switching – Flapless Surgery – Grafting Techniques – CT guided surgery – Esthetic Placements – what works? – When do they work? – When don't they? – Most importantly, what are the indications for each? And equally important -- which manufacturer's claims have substance? Which ones don't?

Rather than address each of these topics here let me rather start with what I believe – a philosophy, if you will, that sums up my approach to any treatment situation. For me, it essentially comes down to the following basics:

- 1) All of these treatments are elective; it is always imperative to minimize risk.**
- 2) Always try to achieve the greatest amount of good with the least amount of surgery, but never forget that less invasive is seldom less risky.**
- 3) New Technology, no matter how exciting, is not a substitute for education, knowledge, and sound clinical judgment based upon experience.**
- 4) A Team will always beat an individual. Astronaut John Glenn said it best, "Teams out perform individuals; especially when performance requires multiple skills, judgment, and expertise"**
- 5) The faster and more frequently new and exciting technologies are presented to us, the greater and more difficult the imperative to stay current becomes. Staying current requires a significant investment of time and resources.**
- 6) Implants and their associated technologies enjoy their greatest success, and provide the greatest patient benefit, when they are utilized to expand upon and extend the reach of established principles of dental treatment.**
- 7) No matter how complex the case, it still always comes down to basics when you are planning treatment.**

Whenever I am asked about decision making in Implant Dentistry I am always reminded of an old sales pitch from one of the implant manufacturers. There was a picture of two golfers on a green with one of the golfers preparing to put a golf ball into a hole that looked to be about thirty feet across. The caption read: “So easy that you can’t miss.” I always found it a poor analogy. What if the golfer did miss? He would certainly look silly, but nothing would be hurt except his pride. There was no imperative for good equipment, experience, or careful planning. I have always compared this add to a picture of a skier, obviously experienced, headed down a steep slope dotted with trees. The imperatives here are obvious: good equipment, good fundamentals, careful planning, and an appropriate level of experience before taking on the challenge. And if the skier does make an error in judgment or preparation it is almost certain that he will be injured.

The latter analogy is far more appropriate when we consider new treatments of any kind for our patients. So before you undertake any implant based treatment – take some lessons, check your equipment, and use your best judgment in deciding which slopes you are prepared to ski. This portion of our web site and the core elements of a broad education initiative that I call **“Education for Success in Implant Dentistry”** will be dedicated to getting you, and your patients, to the base lodge safely.

Paul R. Farrell, D.M.D.