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Operate out of your imagination

A remarkable and potentially transformational meeting occurred August 5-8, 2010, sponsored by the Academy of Osseointegration (AO) for its 25th anniversary, the Silver Anniversary Summit. The title of the meeting was "The Impact of Biological and Technological Advances on Implant Dentistry." The juxtaposition of this fascinating meeting with continued depressing economic news was not lost on the ~120 participants, but did not dampen the brilliant information that was presented.

Topics that were covered included *Bioengineering* (specifically tissue engineering) to develop hard tissue, soft tissue, and even complete teeth; *Growth and Differentiation* using proteins and signaling molecules like growth factors to manipulate healing; *Nanotechnology* to improve implants, healing, tissue stability, and tissue replacement; and *Stem Cells* to regenerate lost tissues. Each subject was presented by an academic expert in his or her field to update the assembly about the state-of-the-art as well as future research directions. Committees comprised of clinicians and academics then met to channel and assess the impact of these pursuits on future clinical practice and recommend translational strategies for progress and implementation. This information will be collated, published, and directed at both industry and the professions for developments that will enter our offices. Some of these products and technologies will be available within 5 years, while others will take a generation until they are ready.

Why write about this event? It is easy to lament the state of the economy and its effect on dental practices these days. In my practice, like many others, we are working very hard to stay even with previous years, with varying degrees of success. But despite current frustrations, pressures, and hardships, we need to look ahead and continue to reinvent our methods, business practices, and ways to treat patients. Without dreams, directions, and plans, we will get stale, cynical, and burned out.

This issue of *Implant Practice US* is all about innovation, better quality, and improved outcomes while being analytical, critical, and open-minded in treating patients. Articles in this issue include interdisciplinary care involving novel orthodontics, intriguing implant design, analysis of complications from poor implant placement, a fresh view of esthetics in retreated patients, and the looming avalanche of peri-implantitis complications. In short, this issue echoes many of the themes of the AO meeting with a call to deliberately assess current practice and methods with a challenge to improve.

Visionary advice on innovation and leadership can be drawn from Drayton McLane, owner of the Houston Astros, who reiterated in a *Baylor Magazine* article a quotation from Dr Kenneth Wilson, former Dean of Michigan State University Graduate School of Business: "Operate out of your imagination, not your memory."

In our world of implant dentistry, working from your imagination requires a strong bedrock foundation of knowledge. Accomplishing this expertise is not simple because it encompasses so many disciplines in biology, materials, surgery, microbiology, immunology, medicine, and restorative dentistry. Additionally, delivering these services can be challenging as it requires management, organization, and psychology.

In summary, there is no shortage of opportunities for us to improvise and add imagination as long as we are not restricted by memory and are comprehensively confident with our foundation. I am convinced that these innovations will be the engine that will allow us to survive and prosper despite gloomy news. There are no shortcuts for this success.

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