

## LEARN TO LOVE THE DENTURE PATIENT AGAIN!

Dentistry is rapidly changing. Clinically, there are many changes that have happened in dentistry over the last ten years that have really been significant in our thought process, our materials and how we apply techniques to patients.

The single biggest example of this is in the implant market. Let me first give you some background on the implant market in the US and in the rest of the world. In the United States, approximately 8% to 10% of general dentists surgically place implants. In many countries around the world, 80% to 90% of general dentists are placing simple implants. For example, I know a number of general dentists in Europe and the Middle East who place implants the way that you and I place composite resins. They place them every day they practice, and it is a routine procedure in their offices.

There are some challenges in the implant market. First of all, the implant market is very confusing as there are numerous companies offering different kinds of implants and many dentists don't even bother to wade through the vast array of products. Secondly, many dentists still live in the past and think that most implants still require two stage surgeries, implants cannot be immediately loaded, six to eight millimeters of bone is needed in a buccal - lingual dimension, and the surgeries are difficult to accomplish. Thirdly, dentists have heard from specialists that complicated diagnostics are needed for any implant case and that is out of the realm of most general dentists. In addition, the cost of these implant is high, thereby making the patient cost for a single tooth implant in the range of \$3,000 to \$4,000.

General dentists do need to get into the implant market immediately. Note to oral surgeons and periodontists – the more your general dentists place implants, the more they will recognize bigger cases and refer more to you. We've seen this in every other single dental specialty with endodontics and orthodontics being perfect examples of this.

The perfect way for most general dentists to start on their implant journey is with narrow diameter implants. These implants are typically in the range of 2 to 2 ½ mm. You can use them in resorbed mandibular ridges, they are very simple to place, 4 mm of buccal lingual bone is adequate, they can be loaded immediately, and most of the time does not even require a flap. Like everything else we do in dentistry, case selection is important for success.

The most common use for a narrow diameter implant is to retain a lower denture. This is a huge untapped market that most dentists shun. There are approximately 50 million denture patients in the United States, 90% of who dislike their lower denture. Most general dentists dislike that same lower denture because it doesn't fit. In a simple one-hour appointment, narrow diameter implants can be placed in the lower jaw and their denture can be made to snap into these implants. The total patient cost is approximately \$3,000, which is a very reasonable compared to conventional implants. This is within the skill set of every general dentist with some training.

The system I use in my own practice is Atlas Narrow Diameter Implants by Dentatus. Take one of their excellent courses and in a few hours, you will be well versed in placing these implants. Dentatus has developed an extremely easy system for general dentists which consists of only two surgical burs. The key to their system is their Tuf-Link silicon liner, which retains the denture incredibly well. This is much different than other mini-implant systems that rely on metal housings in which more of the denture needs to be removed. The Dentatus Atlas System gives the general dentist much more leeway and is significantly easier to use.

By the way, there is a reason that denture clinics have opened up across the US. To a large part, we as general dentists have not responded to this market of 50 million denture patients and corporations definitely see the market and have jumped in to fill the vacuum with good success. Especially in the current economic times, we need to do as many dental procedures as possible to keep our offices profitable and combining dentures and narrow diameter implants together is a wonderful treatment modality.

Learn to love the lower denture patient again. They represent a significant demographic of every dental practice and when you take care of Grandma, she will send in her kids and grandkids. This is an excellent practice builder that has been overlooked for much too long. This will change the way you and your patients look at dentures forever.

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