

Editorial

Synergy: We Are Stronger Together

The COVID-19 crisis has had drastic health, social, and economic effects throughout the world. The short-term future of dentistry is suddenly limited due to the high risk of disease transmission via aerosolization and the challenge this presents. At this time, most dental offices are closed and limited to emergency care. We are navigating how to identify the best practices for caring for our employees, protecting our dental businesses, and preparing for our new normal in practice.

Throughout my career, I have enjoyed synergistic experiences on professional and personal levels. When it comes to treating patients, I have always surrounded myself with a team of specialists I know and trust to provide a team approach to dental care. I limit my practice to periodontal and dental implant-related surgical therapy. Working together with specialist colleagues (including those in prosthodontics, endodontics, orthodontics, and oral surgery) allows for each expert to apply his or her skill in contributing to the diagnosis, treatment plan, and subsequent patient care for a successful result. It is my belief that the combined approach to the diagnostic and planning phase is as important as the actual therapy. I understand that often in group practice settings, specialists are asked to arrive for therapeutic appointments without previously participating in the diagnostic and planning phase of care. This prevents the specialist providers from having an opportunity to contribute to both the diagnostic phase and the patient-education components of care.

Personalized or precision medicine must not forget the key component: The patient! Including the

patient in a comprehensive diagnostic/co-discovery phase of care is critical to the success of complex multidisciplinary dental therapy. The necessary time investment to include the multiple specialty providers in the diagnostic phase will be beneficial, presenting improved outcomes, better patient understanding and compliance, and less stressful visits through the trust built between the patient and providers during this initial phase of planning.

During the COVID-19 crisis, I am incredibly impressed with the leadership throughout the dental community. Dentistry is blessed to have a large number of active organizations. Historically, these organizations often function as separate islands and limit their services to their active memberships. However, during this time there have been a large number of collaborative efforts as the different stakeholders in the dental community work together to provide support and education to dental professionals. They have identified topics of acute interest, including: education on the science of COVID-19; updated information on options to navigate dental practices through this time, including human resources and financial management; and updated practices for infection control in consideration of the added risks to dental professionals and patients due to the pathogenesis and transmission of the virus.

The transition to web-based communication has been immediate and includes telemedicine patient communication, office staff updates, virtual education for all students, and webinars for dental education. A variety of dental societies have taken an open approach

to educating dental professionals via webinars during this time. The impressive aspect is that multiple webinars have had between 1,000 and 2,500 participants; previous educational webinars I have been involved in as an organizer or participant had between 50 and 500. The webinars have all been free of charge and have been cross-marketed throughout the dental community as opposed to having a registration cost or being limited to active members. Organizations such as the Academy of Osseointegration and the American Academy of Periodontology have mobilized to provide pertinent and timely information to clinicians beyond that related only to clinical periodontics and implantology. For anyone who has previously asked "What is organized dentistry doing?" They now have an affirmative answer: Everything!

As we continue through this crisis, more educational opportunities focused on dental practice are available, such as the American Academy of Esthetic Dentistry and the European Academy of Esthetic Dentistry webinar series. These daily lectures aim to educate graduate-level dental students using presentations that all practicing clinicians and educators can learn from. This combined effort from these societies across the Atlantic is a perfect example of the success that synergy can bring.

I am hopeful that when we exit this time of social distancing and dormant practices, we enter a new era that values working together in an effort to improve the level of our profession and the care we provide to our patients.

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