

In Memoriam Alain Rochette



When you have true passion, it lasts a lifetime. Even having to retire does not extinguish it. Alain Rochette, who left us recently at the age of 80, was one such impassioned individual. Up until 6 years ago, he still practiced in his private office, after which he passed along the responsibility to his daughter. Nevertheless, he remained a ferocious reader of scientific papers and perfectly knowledgeable even of the smallest therapeutic innovation.

He was an outstanding personality. Mainstream did not fit his character at all. His excesses on formalism were his conviction, based on extremely long and deep reflections. Once you understood this, you could accept it and enjoy and absorb his lectures.

I first met Alain Rochette in the early 70s with our common teacher, Professor Raymond Leibowitch. Alain was one of his first students, who had obtained a DMD at the medical faculty in Paris in 1961. Even then, he had visions of searching for the most conservative treatments to allow maximum saving of sound tissue. He was convinced that bonding and the use of small transcoronal screws would be good solutions for minimally invasive treatment. He was a pioneer, an intensive clinician who realized with his own hands in his dental practice the ideas he dreamed of. For instance, we owe him the concept of the bonded bridge.¹ His name will forever be linked to this technique, which in the dental world is still called the "Rochette bridge".

However, Alain Rochette's contribution to dentistry goes far beyond bonded bridges, even though this concept gained worldwide recognition and application. He was also the first to propose the use of silanes for bonding ceramic restorations.² Furthermore, he introduced the use of anatomical and functional templates for the reconstruction of lost tooth substance with a direct Class IV composite restoration.³ I will only focus on these 3 examples, because they are excellent representatives of the 3 principles present in every aspect of his work: restore the function, re-establish the esthetic aspect, and respect the biology and dental tissues. One of his favorite sayings was

that you should do your best to avoid putting teeth in a pencil sharpener. He was more than convincing as a lecturer: he dominated the stage and was able to defend his cause very well.



Resin bonded bridge according to the Rochette concept, inserted in 1978 (Laboratory: Claude Gentilhomme).

His PhD thesis was published as a book in French: "Visage-collage en Odonto-stomatologie" (Screw retention and bonding in dentistry)⁴. When I heard the sad news that Alain Rochette had passed away, I retrieved his book from my library and skimmed through it again. In it, I found therapy proposals that are remarkably up to date. Most of what we are doing today is already described there. Of course, progress in materials and technology allows us to optimize the treatment modalities he described for traumatology, pediatric dentistry, restorative dentistry, and prosthodontics. Remarkable, too, is the proposal to use overlays to re-establish the correct occlusal dimension, once it has been lost. The foundations of modern concepts of adhesive dentistry were all perfectly laid in



The abutment teeth were not prepared at all, only etched with phosphoric acid.



The “bonding” to the metallic wings was accomplished by the undercuts created by the perforations.

that book. As with most dental pioneers, his scientific laboratory was his daily practice. The “experiments” became his experience, which he bequeathed to us.

As I closed his book, it occurred to me that Alain Rochette is more alive than ever. To convince you, I would simply like to cite from the Preface of his book:

“For us, progress in dentistry is the quest for using the least invasive preparations possible, combined with the introduction of techniques which do not require exceptional manual skills from the operators, but mainly rely on the professional conscience to respect operative protocols.”

There is nothing more to add!

Alain’s book was dedicated to his father, Marcel, who was a practitioner at the Côte d’Azur in Saint Raphaël. He succeeded his father in his office and, when his time came, he passed the torch on to his daughter. This is a dynasty he was proud of.

Now I close my eyes, and in my imagination, I see him somewhere up there swearing about our current bad

trends to sacrifice sound dental tissues. Alain taught us to have the utmost respect for the teeth Nature has given us. Let us listen to his lesson!

Prof. Dr. med. dent. Michel Degrange

References

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