



Accentuate the Positive

Most of us have probably heard the song “Accentuate the Positive,” but I doubt there are many who knew that Johnny Mercer was thinking about implant dentistry when he wrote this song. This has to be true, since the lyrics clearly describe everything we know about implant therapy. Let’s dissect the song and see what Mercer had in mind.

The first line of the chorus is “Accentuate the positive.” Isn’t this exactly what we do when we speak with patients about dental implants? So often, patients are discouraged by the failure of previous procedures; whether it was recurrent caries, progressive periodontal disease, or a traumatic event, the specter of tooth loss concerns many patients. We address this situation with the calming reassurance that there are solutions for missing teeth that are more predictable than ever before.

Imagine the effect that positive comments have on a patient facing the loss of a critical tooth. Whether it is a tooth in an esthetic area or one that serves a strategic purpose for retention of a dental prosthesis, the knowledge that a dental implant can be used to support a replacement tooth must be comforting to the fretful patient.

The next line, “Eliminate the Negative,” describes the primary reason that implant awareness is growing. The early days of implant dentistry were something akin to a chemistry experiment where raw materials were mixed with a hope of favorable outcomes but the actual results were generally disappointing. An improved understanding of biocompatible materials, appropriate surgical techniques, and careful application of prosthetic principles has transformed this experiment into a predictable recipe for success that has very little opportunity for negative outcomes.

“And latch on to the affirmative” is the next statement that describes modern implant treatment. When a medical treatment provides favorable responses for 10 years, at a rate that is in excess of 93%, it is pretty easy to latch on to those affirmative results.

The last line of the chorus is the one that convinced me that Mercer was talking about dentistry. He wrote: “Don’t mess around with Mr In-Between.” I am firmly convinced that this line refers to a missing tooth with other remaining teeth being present on either side of the space. Obviously, this partially edentulous space is “Mr In-Between” and we all know that if pontics are eliminated, the overall patient prognosis will be improved. By removing the pontic, the stress on the adjacent natural teeth is unaltered. The implant in the edentulous space will preserve bone better than if no implant were present. Caries will not develop at the implant-abutment interface. Elimination of the pontic makes oral hygiene easier because there is no need for the dreaded floss threader. Undeniably, the elimination of Mr In-Between was a prescient comment from Mr Mercer, as the song was written more than 20 years prior to the first human application of the osseointegration technique.

Isn’t it amazing how music enriches our lives and furthers our understanding of unexpected topics such as implant therapy?

Steven E. Eckert, DDS, MS
Editor-in-Chief