

Fusing traditional techniques and new technology

Three computers were in line as we sat with two friends composing a new book.

While swapping information from machine to machine using a portable disk drive, I noticed a plaque built into the wall. My host, Professor Ugo Covani, explained that this plaque commemorated the building of the structure that now contains his office. The date was 1472.

I was struck by this fusion of old with the new and how it tied perfectly into the theme of our text. This book is about placing implants into immediate extraction sockets. One facet (tooth extraction) has been practiced successfully since the dawn of recorded history. And while implants have been placed since ancient times, only recently, thanks to advances in science and technology, have we been able to successfully fuse these two aspects of therapy. Specifically, we now understand that osseointegration is predictable when certain guidelines on tooth extraction and socket preparation are followed immediately by the placement of an implant with a "rough" surface.

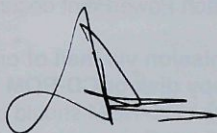
New approaches are vital to progress in dentistry, but we often become so enamored with the latest facts that we ignore therapies that have passed the test of time. For example, during the research for this book, we performed an extensive literature review, which included several classifications of the relation of implant placement to tooth extraction. When a colleague was asked to edit this review, he commented that the most recent classification was preferred. He said that since it was the most recent it should be the best. Our reply was that newer is not always better and that one of the previous classifications included aspects not found in the more recent one.

I welcome and enjoy change. In my 30 years of clinical practice I have always tried leading-edge technologies. I think I owe it to my patients to test new ideas that might prove helpful in treating their problems. This experience has taught me that em-

bracing the new is extremely important. But it also has taught me that in most cases new technology works best when fused with traditional techniques.

We have been able to make tremendous strides in dentistry because of the past efforts of our colleagues. But when the lessons of experience are sacrificed on the altar of new technology, our patients can suffer. One striking example is the use of new restorative materials to support the posterior occlusion. In their attempt to apply new techniques, often in the absence of good science, some practitioners have used these materials to support the posterior occlusion. Many of these materials have proven inadequate to support functional loading seen during mastication and patients have paid the price of innovation.

I will continue to try new approaches and new technology, but I also think that, whenever possible, it is important to fuse new techniques with the tried and true.



Thomas G. Wilson, DDS
Editor-in-Chief

Addendum: It is most appropriate that I mention here this year's introduction of electronic manuscript submission to QI. This system will help to streamline the review process and will allow authors to log on using their article number to review the status of their submissions. It is our hope that this technology will alleviate the problems QI has been experiencing with the tremendous increase in article submissions. See pages 6 and 7 for more information.