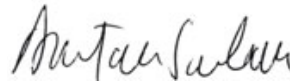


Preventive Maintenance: The Key Factor for Long-term Treatment Success

The classical studies published by Axelsson et al¹ provided a beautiful example of how proper oral hygiene and regular maintenance can prevent caries and maintain good periodontal health. Their results showed that the use of professional preventive measures by dental professionals (i.e. dental hygienists or dentists) in addition to improved self-performed oral hygiene measures was able to prevent further loss of periodontal attachment and reduce the development of new caries lesions to fewer than two caries surfaces per subject over 30 years. More importantly, these positive outcomes were found in all age groups (i.e. the oldest age group was 81 to 95 years old at the end of the study), thus indicating that excellent self-care habits and regular maintenance can be successfully established in adults, independent of their age.

In the last two decades, as dental implants became a reliable treatment modality, more and more dental practitioners have started to treat periodontitis or caries through extraction and tooth replacement by dental implants, in an attempt to simplify treatment. Certainly, the use of dental implants is a revolutionary, evidence-based and reliable new option in dentistry, but recent evidence indicates that without a regular maintenance programme including clinical re-evaluation, plaque control, oral hygiene instruction and professional preventive measures by dental professionals, the benefits of treatment cannot be maintained on a long-term basis and biological complications such as peri-implant mucositis and/or peri-implantitis may re-

sult.^{2,3} Given today's rapidly increasing elderly population, the number of patients treated with dental implants is also growing. Thus, it is increasingly important that dentists be aware that long-term treatment success or failure depends on their ability to establish and maintain a preventive programme.^{2,3} More than ever, it has become evident that preventive dentistry – including primary, secondary and tertiary prevention – is the most important field for our profession to focus on.



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