

Vision and Reality

Dear Reader,

A favorite text slide that I use quite often in my lectures and presentations about preventive dentistry states: "Vision. The day is surely coming, and perhaps within the lifetime of young men before me, when we will be engaged in practicing preventive, rather than reparative dentistry."

This was the vision of G.V. Black, a very famous researcher and teacher of restorative dentistry, which he delivered during a lecture in 1886 at the Northwestern University in Chicago. Today, more than 100 years later, this statement makes me sad. For the majority of dentists in this world, caries therapy still means restorative therapy – i.e. drill out the decayed tissue and restore the hole with some artificial material. This is accepted as a given, and thus, the dentist destroys more healthy hard tissue in seconds than the caries managed to do in months or even years.

This continues to be the predominant perception of dentistry, also in the industry. IDS, the world's largest dental exhibition, which took place in Cologne (Germany) in March, clearly demonstrated this hitherto unbroken trend. The greatest number of displayed materials and equipment was solely dedicated to restorative dentistry. The visitor was overwhelmed by high-tech dentistry delivered by 21st century practitioners – from restorative materials to implants and huge CAD-CAM machines, ceramics, dentures, and all the instruments and

equipment to manufacture and insert these marvels of technology. Apart from toothbrushes and toothpaste, there was not much on display for anyone interested in finding equivalent materials to prevent disease and maintain the oral health of patients.

This makes me even sadder, since we all know how to prevent caries and periodontal diseases. There is much to do at the diagnostic end of the therapy and on the preventive causal therapy approach.

ORAL HEALTH & PREVENTIVE DENTISTRY has a great responsibility. It must disseminate the knowledge of preventive dentistry and hammer this message home to restorative dentists, that there is a better way to care for their patients' health than doing restorations. Please do not misunderstand me, we definitely need high quality restorations with very good longevity for all our patients who have not taken advantage of prevention. However, our first thought should always be: "Why is this patient sick and what can I do to eliminate the disease?" and not "How can I reconstruct the damage?" If every dentist in this world took this approach, dentistry would really serve the health of our patients and would have a place in the pantheon of fame!



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