

On Scholarly Texts and Enduring Influences

The last 2 decades of the 20th century were extraordinary for my predilected discipline of prosthodontics. They ushered in a strong biological focus that gradually matched, and perhaps even eclipsed, traditionally exclusive concerns with dental materials and techniques. The change was an inevitable and welcome one; it belatedly paralleled the shift toward enhanced synergies in basic and clinical sciences that influenced development in a few clinical dental disciplines. Neurophysiology, bioengineering, and health economics emerged as profound concerns in the effort to provide predictable treatment outcomes that recognize both patient- and dentist-mediated concerns. It is perhaps impossible to identify a specific text or event that catalyzed the much-needed changes. Most significant events in history, or breakthroughs in science, tend to have similar origins—numerous unrelated but ultimately convergent occurrences. Small streams of thought and experiment gradually merged to create a river full of force and momentum, which in turn irrigated new sources of creativity.

My own personal academic development was influenced by 2 particular Scandinavian works. The first was the late Neils Brill's 1977 paper, "Ecologic changes in the oral cavity caused by removable partial dentures"; the second, Per-Ingvar Brånemark's seminal 1977 monograph on osseointegrated implants. Both authors framed the prosthodontist's twin concerns, which must direct evidence-based clinical decisions: First, what is the biological price paid as a result of the diverse consequences of loss of teeth? Second, what is the biological price inherent in the proposed prosthodontic intervention? Brill's very perceptive, if understandably limited, ecological focus gradually expanded the very notion of adverse ecological shifts beyond plaque considerations to microscopic and macroscopic occlusal trauma, and the time-dependent wear and tear aspects of the aging process in a potentially hostile oral environment. Brånemark, on the other hand, proposed an entirely new model for exploiting the benefits of an induced periodontal ligament analogue. He demonstrated resultant versatile therapeutic benefits that accompany a scientific transition from an uncontrolled to a controlled induced interfacial osteogenesis. The impact of both ideas cannot be underestimated, particularly in the context of

the subtle yet profound differences in dental, as opposed to medical, biotechnology. It is worth reiterating that we prosthodontists have been in the "spare parts" business for a very long time; and we have done it largely without the need for tricky ethical questions, such as associated medicine's concerns with genetics and organ transplantation. In fact, until recently, our collective commitment to enriching our patients' lives, while hopefully prolonging the outcome success of our interventions, did not demand the same degree of scientific rigor in the way we made clinical decisions. However, the bar has now been raised, as more rigorous standards have emerged to reflect both dentist- and patient-mediated outcome expectations.

At the end of September I attended a remarkable 40th Anniversary of Osseointegration ad modum Brånemark, in Sao Paulo, Brazil. The graciousness of the Brazilian hosts was matched by the very high quality of the presentations from an international "who's who" in the field of intra- and extraoral rehabilitation. It was a happy, nostalgic reminder of the impact of an extraordinary scholar's contributions to science and humanity. It was also an assertion of what is most noble and caring, and sometimes even confused (if always humanitarian), about being in a health profession. I was reminded of the occasional need for a reaffirmation of what we are, indeed what we should be, all about, as we confront daily the depressing cynicism and commercialism that recurrently challenge our standards and true professional remit.

Brånemark took suitable advantage of the intellectual festivities to launch his latest and possibly his last major opus, *The Osseointegration Book*, published by Quintessence. It weighs in at almost 2 kg and is an impressive reiteration of his scientific legacy. The work impacts very particularly and in a comprehensive and eclectic manner on the underlying and essential synergy between surgery and prosthodontics. It confirms once again that scholarship's traditional role of communication continues to depend upon the written word. Thus, it reasserts the ongoing need for a continuum of outstanding publications that articulate this new vision for prosthodontic rehabilitation.

This leads me to yet another individual whose career we honor in this, our final issue for 2005. In the last 2

years, Professor Giulio Preti and his colleagues have contributed significantly to the canon of such publications, and all of us in the discipline have been enlightened by their masterful efforts. I have been studying the Turin team's contribution to dental scholarship—research, education, and service—for several years, and theirs has been an exemplary record of commitment and leadership. They have now distilled an enormous body of knowledge and wisdom in the writing of their books, presenting their convictions in a lucid and highly organized manner. I have little doubt that these particular texts, especially after their English language publications, will be regarded as stand-out contributions to our discipline. Above all, the publications are a compelling testimony to the purpose and meaning of clinical acad-

emics' lives. Giulio Preti and his Turin colleagues deserve our gratitude for their outstanding contribution. The IJP is also grateful to Dr John Beumer from UCLA, a member of our editorial family, who graciously and diligently accepted my invitation to write the well-deserved Preti tribute. Dr Beumer is the recipient of an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Turin in recognition of a long-standing scholarly collaboration between their 2 universities and has enjoyed extensive first-hand experience of the European dental scholarship scene.

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