

Inspiration in Prosthodontics

Let's be honest: who among us doesn't sometimes get bogged down in the day-to-day monotony of our jobs? For those of us in academic dentistry, it revolves around student grades, faculty meetings, looming budget concerns, grant application deadlines, and papers to write/review/edit. For those of you in private practice, it's budget concerns (a universal concern!), maintaining a full patient schedule, managing a staff and a practice . . . the list goes on.

Yes, it can be easy to lose sight of the inspirational nature of prosthodontics—the very reason we selected prosthodontics as a specialty program. The extraordinarily complex patients that we have referred to us for comprehensive, highly complicated care; the patients who have their oral condition (and their lives) devastated by trauma, disease, and sometimes, even supervised “neglect.” These patients are often at the proverbial “end of their rope” with dentistry, until they have the great fortune to land in one of our offices. The knowledge, skill, and caring that our colleagues provide these dental “cripples,” taking them from the edge of hopelessness to a life filled with joy, happiness, and function, is often highly compelling.

If you have not yet seen the video, “Kim's Story,” on the ACP website, I invite you to do so. It may help remind you why you selected OUR business in the first place. The link from the ACP homepage (prosthodontics.org) says “Watch How a Prosthodontist Transforms a Patient's Life.” That's the reminder—*prosthodontists transforming patients' lives*. We restore function. We restore esthetics. We restore a patient's dignity. And, we change lives.

Kim was born with a cleft palate and required years of dental work. When Kim's dental work failed when she was 38 years old, Dr. Lawrence Brecht completely reconstructed her mouth, providing her with a beautiful smile that Kim calls “museum quality.” Now, that's inspirational!

We have printed this special supplement of the *Journal of Prosthodontics* to showcase other such inspirational patient treatments, and our goal is to provide inspiration to you, and to your patients. This supplement was sponsored by a generous grant by Nobel Biocare to the ACP Education Foundation, and was specifically targeted at showcasing the great work that we, as prosthodontists, perform.

In four of the selected cases, the patients suffered from rare diseases that severely affected their esthetics and function. These patients present some of the most challenging cases prosthodontists see, requiring consultation with a multidisciplinary team. In Dr. Avinash Bidra's presented case (a patient

with Fabry's disease), he consulted with a periodontist, endodontist, and orthodontist to develop a treatment plan, and further needed input from the patient's nephrologist in order to properly carry out the treatment plan. Sometimes, though, the most challenging can be the most inspirational. Imagine Dr. George Papavasilou's satisfaction when he could finally answer “yes” to his patient's (a sufferer of Langerhans cell histiocytosis) question, “Is today the day I get my new teeth?”

Dr. Robert Berg and colleagues, and Dr. Vicki Petropoulos and colleagues treated patients with Cleidocranial Dysplasia. They chose different approaches to their patients' treatment, but still lead to vastly improved qualities of life. Dr. Berg's group introduces a concept to treat teenaged patients so that they maintain esthetics during the all-too-difficult adolescent years. Dr. Petropoulos's group, on the other hand, treats a 45-year-old patient who needed their assistance after many years of dental work that did not meet her ultimate needs.

If we only treated sufferers of rare disease, though, our Specialty would be in distress. More often, we see mouths ravaged by more common, but no less destructive, oral and systemic conditions. Two cases presented in this supplement fall into that category: a patient who struggled for decades with gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), which consistently eroded her teeth; and a 23-year-old woman missing her anterior mandibular teeth after removal of a Central Giant Cell Granuloma.

Please watch “Kim's Story” on the ACP's website, enjoy the cases you read in this special supplement, and take the time to think about the inspirational work you do every day. Even the simplest treatment you conducted today was an inspiration to someone—probably the patient who left your office with a fabulous smile and improved function.

Before I close, another offer of thanks to Nobel Biocare, whose generous educational grant made the publishing of this special supplement possible. Please take the time to thank them when you see their representatives at the ACP Annual Session this year in Scottsdale, AZ.

And please, if you have a case that inspires you, share it with us! If you're new to the publishing field, we'll be more than happy to help you along. Inspirational cases like these remind me what an inspiring profession prosthodontics truly is, and what led me to select it as my life's work.

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