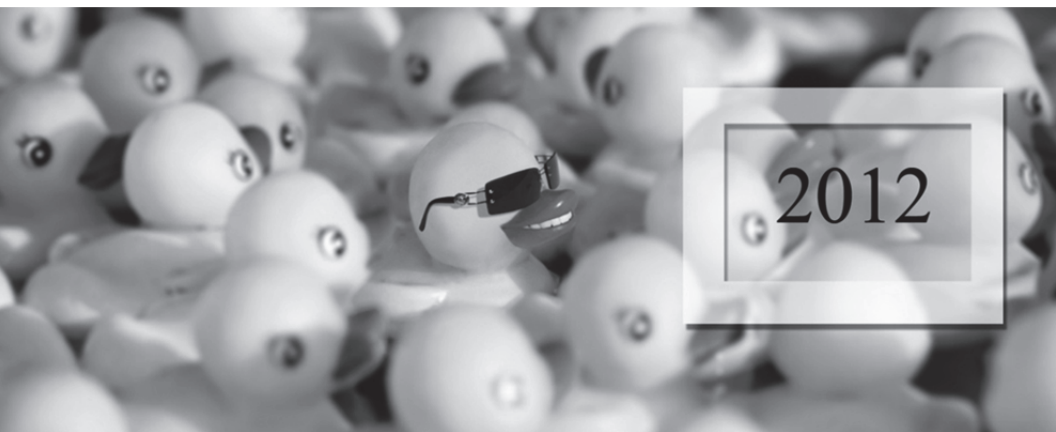


How to Become a Unique Dentist

A Quick Manual for Dentists Aiming
for Perfection

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About the author

The author of this book is a professor of prosthodontics at Alexandria University, one of the oldest universities in the world. He also worked as the dean of Pharos Dental School, a prestigious private dental school in Alexandria, Egypt.

He is the founder of an internationally recognized implant association, AOIA, which is the biggest and first affiliated Implant Association to the well-known Implant Association ICOI.

Prof. Attar is an international speaker in prosthodontics and implants.

However, he has always been especially proud of being a “successful private practitioner,” since he reaches his utmost fulfillment when working on a big case.

Because he is such a passionate practitioner, he has published several articles which are all “clinically applicable.”

For his entire life, his main goal was to be considered “A Unique Dentist.” After succeeding to do so, he decided to help other new dentists achieve this same goal by writing this book.



∞ Dedication

*This book is dedicated to the soul of a great man, my late father.
He was a dentist, and whatever level I reach, it's always for him.
God bless his soul.*

My mother, who always says that I am unique as a person.

*My wife, who always stood beside me, rich or poor, stressed or
relaxed.*

*My ex-chairman and mentor in Pittsburgh, U.S.A., who
made me love dentistry.*

Prof. Attar





Preface

Dentistry is beautiful. Imagine a profession that combines science, technology, medicine, and fine arts. For me, being a dentist has always been very satisfying, but being a unique dentist is absolutely magnificent.

But what really makes you unique? Around the world there are millions of dentists, but only hundreds of them make a difference.



You are now receiving your dental degree, walking away from school, and making your very

first steps in the world of dentistry. No matter why and how you became a dentist, your journey has just begun.

Whether you have been a hard working student or just an ordinary one, you fell in love with the idea, knowledge and skills, or just took it for granted in the past, it doesn't matter! This does not determine what you can be as a professional.

No excellent grades will guarantee you a great future, and lower grades will not mean that you don't have what it takes. This is a completely different world with only one rule: "if you love it, you will master it."

Every one of us must have someone to look up to. Sometimes you're inspired by these role models, but other times you get frustrated thinking, "how am I ever going to be like this doctor or that professor? There's no way I can do it."

Again, this is not true. This is just the lazy part of your subconscious playing games on you. You can be whatever you want to be, and even better than you ever thought you could be.

My friends used to call me "the dreamer." I used to hate that word thinking that it implied being non-realistic, but as time passed, I discovered

that a person without dreams and hopes should be considered the nobody. A person without dreams is the non-realistic one.

Every single achievement I've had simply started with a dream and evolved by thinking, reading and persistence.

For a young dentist, knowledge is a must. Reading should be an essential part of your life, and you should try to gain as much knowledge as possible. When you read about dental science, you get thirsty for more, and the more you know the more you realize that you need to learn.

Your dreams might be directed towards making money, popularity, or self-esteem. What it all boils down to is simply this: you have to be great on the dental chair, and you must be strong to gain other people's trust and respect.

As a dentist, you need to know that you are there to make people feel, look and function better. You are the provider of comfort and confidence to your patients.

You should love and respect your profession. Look stylish, act stylish and feel stylish. You should have an elegant personality as well as an elegant appearance. All this will make people look at you in a very professional way.

You should remember that good dental work is always the result of team work; therefore you must be able to work in a team, love, and be loved by your team.

You should attend all of the courses and congresses you can afford. Either you're planning to be a general practitioner or specialize in something. In both cases, dreaming of becoming a unique dentist can by all means come true.

Your upcoming journey through the ocean of dentistry will be full of ups and downs, mysteries, tips and tricks, treasures and finally big smiles.

This book is a collection of thoughts, experiences and advice. It is comprised of thoughts that came to my mind during my own dental journey, it is a

some of my colleagues, and it includes advice on things that I have accomplished and things that I had hoped and still hope to accomplish one day.

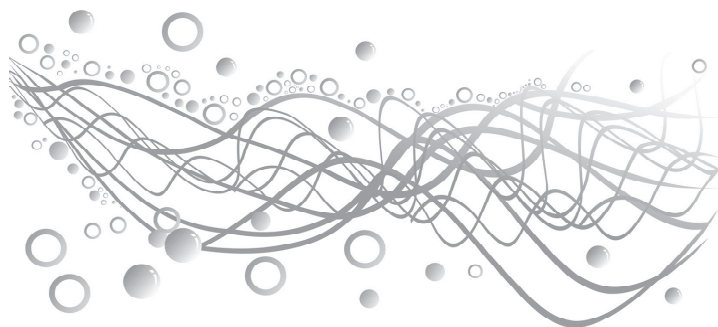




Getting Started

For a young dentist in any country around the world the story is always the same. It reminds me of the episode “Lost in Space: A Professional Who Does Not Know How to Start”. You find yourself at a crossroads not sure where to go.

- Should I start attending different courses and congresses?
- Should I start by assisting a well-known dentist?
- Should I enroll myself in a post graduate program at a well-known dental school?
- Should I start a small practice?



- Should I start a big practice?
- Should I work in a well-established practice as a general practitioner?

Let's analyze the choices and understand each one, but to do that you should first ask yourself: What's my vision? Where do I see myself in fifteen or twenty years?

Invading most dentists' way of thinking, you'll find their goals revolve mainly around four major dreams. Asking yourself which one is right for you, makes it easy to choose the correct path.

So, do you see yourself as:

- A prestigious and famous professor?
- A successful dental practitioner?
- An international speaker?
- A rich dentist?

Sound confusing? Not at all, because when it comes to dentistry, the right start is always by being "a successful dental practitioner." To excel first in the applied part of dentistry, involves lots of learning and training, as well as collecting as much knowledge as you can. By all means, you may then go ahead and choose your path.

In old times, famous and recognized dentists had to be professors because innovations and

statements were only coming from academics. Nowadays rules have changed, and most of the recognized dentists are real clinicians who started their journey by succeeding in dental practice first, and reached the level of being recognized authorities in the world of dentistry.

Nowadays, respectable dental schools are offering positions to successful clinicians, while a great professor would not be able to do well as a clinician.

Recognized international speakers are mostly without academic degrees, because they proved to be unique in something, so the world started listening to them.

So how do you become a successful clinician?

Practice makes perfect...

A false idea is stuck in our minds that a successful clinician has to be born with the gift. This proves to be wrong, as most successful clinicians went through lots of learning and training to reach a high level. So if you're thinking "I don't have it," I'm here to tell you "you can get it."

I've seen many dentists who have started by doing lousy preparations and fillings, and have ended up being excellent and skillful practitioners.

Read, Read, Read...

The world is full of knowledge waiting to be learned. A young dentist should definitely be eager to lend or buy textbooks. Read and grab as much knowledge as you can; read a book every week. It's like homework with no exams or teachers, and it will build in your subconscious. Keep an open mind that not everything you read is applicable in every case. Try to be the judge, and put your practical experience over the text you read.

Courses everywhere...

It's the era of information now, and wherever you are you must find plenty of courses and congresses throughout the year. Attend all courses you can afford to attend, even if it involves topics you think you have no interest in. It happens a lot that a certain subject looks different or boring while you're a student, but

then it proves great and challenging when you really get to understand it.

Dental exhibitions and social activities are great, but in the beginning it's always KNOWLEDGE that's most important. Always sit in the front row because if you sit in back row, you are usually distracted by watching other people. Don't let any phrase pass without understanding it; if you don't then ask.

But beware of liars as life is full of them. Some speakers exaggerate about their skills and results, these are the great self-marketers. You might fall in their traps by trying to imitate what they are saying, and it will more than likely fail. This is because you lack the appropriate knowledge. You saw and were impressed with what they wrongfully said, but you didn't take the effort to read about it.

I remember one very eminent speaker was once asked about a very strange technique he was using with no evidence based data. When asked about it, his reply was "I use it because it works." If you go by his way without reading about it, you put yourself in a great risk of failure.

Programs and degrees...

Going for a degree or a residency program is a great chance to improve your clinical and knowledge level. It gives you a chance to be in a system which makes learning and gaining experience much easier. However, it is not everything. When I got my Ph.D., some professors told me this is only the start; I didn't get it back then, but it proved to be right. It is one thing to gain degrees and a whole different thing to succeed as a clinician. It takes hard work, persistence and constant motivation. You will only get better one step at a time.

But what about not having the chance or the financial support to enroll in such a system? Does this mean you cannot become the dentist you wish to be? Fortunately, the answer is NO. Many general practitioners are much better in special dentistry than specialists in the same field. In time they became well known and were even approached for help and advice by dentists with higher degrees.

In both situations, you should start by having the will to become unique. You should possess an urge to be the best, either in dental practice as a whole or in just one specialty.

Referrals...

The best clinician is well aware of his strengths and weaknesses. He loves his patients and knows when to treat them himself, or when to refer them to a colleague who does a specific procedure better than him. He must have full confidence and security, being absolutely sure that his patients will respect him more.

Money making scenario...

It is so common among young dentists to think of different scenarios to get RICH. They keep searching for the specialty that makes more money, the procedures that cost less and pay more, and the latest trends in the field that people go nuts over. Let me tell you right now this is not the right way to think about your career.

Instead, think about being a successful, knowledgeable practitioner first, then you will make money. No matter what specialty you choose for yourself, “success is when you reach the level of naming your fees and not caring if your patient thinks it’s a lot. You would not accept less than that. If your patient says it’s too

much money, you can lose the case with no regrets,” as my mentor once told me.

In order to get rich, you need to spend time, effort and money to learn and practice. In attending courses and congresses, you should mainly concentrate on knowledge. Don't be too hasty, time is all you've got. You're in the building phase now, and one day it will pay off, but only if the building phase is perfect.

Speak to the world...

The feeling of being listened to is unbelievable. Can you be this person? Will you ever be approached by an organization, a company, or even a school to give a lecture somewhere? The answer is yes.

And the way to achieve this is simple; be strong in what you do.

organization, or association. Try to be the youngest amongst them. You might feel you are doing nothing, but the truth is you are still learning from everyone around you. You would be surprised to know that even great speakers learn from their attendees. They open

discussions and talk about subjects that the speaker may have missed.

everything starting from dealing to managing discussions, learning the gift of presenting a lecture, and eventually being a speaker yourself.

Academia...

If life takes you in the academic direction, please make sure not to forget that you are a dentist. It is the creativity that comes from your experience that counts. You will teach students to be dentists. How can you do that without being a skillful dentist yourself?

Throughout my journey in the dental world, I've had many chances to compare excellent professors and excellent practitioners; the second is my favorite by all means. We are made for our patients.

Opening a clinic...

Here comes the big question: should I open a practice? The answer would be a clever NO!

Even if you had financial means, just wait and give yourself a chance to learn and practice. Do not practice on your future private patients. Be a strong knowledgeable dentist first and then go ahead with it.

Some young dentists get the idea of starting a luxurious practice, depending on fascinating decorations and expensive equipment. This reminds me of the physician who asked for very sophisticated radiographs for his patients and then failed to read them!

Believe me, equipment and decorations are not at all enough. It's your knowledge and personality that make the whole difference. Some of my colleagues went and bought expensive bleaching equipment. A few months later, they were dying to sell it. They didn't give themselves the chance to understand the real deal behind a temporary treatment that leaves the majority of your patients disappointed.

Working Smarter...

A tricky question might rise here; what if I did it all wrong already? What if I'm in the middle of my career after taking all or many wrong

decisions about it? Is there time to change? Is there a chance to correct my course?

Absolutely yes!

Many of the best practitioners and speakers around the world rediscovered themselves in their early fifties. You wouldn't think so, but believe me it is true. Some of them told me that they were circling in their normal routine, when suddenly they discovered that they were wasting their energy in ordinary procedures while they proved extraordinary in special procedures. They regretted losing time but had the will to start a new stage of their lives. Some of them even started a new way of life as a whole, right after they started to think "work smarter and not harder."

Dentists are artists and most of them are really unusual human beings. People don't know what it's like to live a whole career inside the oral cavity. General surgeons think they are better than us; however, they mostly work in theatres with general anesthesia, free to work with no patient resistance. On the other hand, we are required to do a perfect painless job while our patients are afraid, resisting and complaining.

We are, in a strong sense, experts in psychiatry. We can change our patients' personalities while working. We also get very close to our patients, making them feel well taken care of and attended to.

What happens is that, without us noticing, we become philosophers. Accordingly, at any time, a philosopher would come up with a new look on life. You could decide to change course or, in other words, start over from scratch.

A big decision would be, for example, a total renovation of your practice; maybe increasing

younger dentists to work with you, keeping in mind that you go your own way. This would give you the satisfaction of being the "BOSS" while you're at it!

Another way of changing may involve the decision of contacting a certain company that provides a product you use extensively. You can reach a deal of being their speaker, which involves lots of traveling and money. Many of us clinicians enjoy our patient's satisfaction, but some, who are very unlucky, do their jobs as a boring routine. I can't help but feel sorry for that

dentistry, and are living their lives with a dull and painful void.

I once read a well-known book in psychiatry called “The Road Less Traveled,” which included two very interesting chapters. The first was titled “Falling In Love” and the second was titled: “Falling Out of Love”. I understood this when it was concerned with romantic love, but I totally rejected this idea when it came to my profession. The more you get involved in your work, the more you love it and master it.

It is normal, of course, to go through some tedious times while working. However, you should never give yourself a chance to slip into a routine, as it’s such a killer of joy.

Each and every case is a puzzle of its own; an interesting maze that lightens up your time and makes it extremely enjoyable.





The Office

In your practice you are a superstar; a celebrity, and just like celebrities you need to take care of every tiny detail. You must be relaxed, cheerful and elegant the way a superstar must be in public. This gives your patients a comforting feeling.

Starting from the cleanliness of the reception area, the ambiance of the office, and ending by



your clothes and your personal hygiene, everything must be perfectly well attended to.

If you think that your work in the patient's mouth is all that matters, you are absolutely wrong. Healing is a complicated process that's greatly dependant on the psychological status of the patient. Research shows that patients scoring low grades of stress,

anxiety and depression, were associated with 4 times faster healing for their wounds than patients scoring higher grades of stress, anxiety and depression.

Every detail in your office, team and yourself plays a part in setting the mood of your patient and building their trust and comfort.

Reception...

The reception is the welcoming area of your office. It is the very first impression that gets put in your patients minds and last.

A calm, clean, and freshly scented reception area works miracles in that matter, treating all senses and creating the welcoming and relaxing feeling you want to deliver.

A smiling and kind hearted receptionist is a treasure. My receptionist is adored by my patients; she feels pain for them (which sometimes caused trouble as she would include an emergency case - or cases - in a crowded day just because they told her they are having pain. Many times, the cases turn out to be pretty normal and stable, and the patients were just trying to find an early appointment. To be

honest, I used to hate it when she did that, but the patients loved her for her warmth and compassion, and accordingly loved the office).

Manners and protocols...

A welcoming drink to the patients' family or friends works magic. It's a way of making your patients and relatives feel at home. If you are going to be late working on a previous case, make sure to go out and personally apologize to your next patient. Always escort your patient outside to the reception area and wish him comfort.

You and your patients

The relationship between you and your patient is very important, and you should take it seriously. You are the king of your office, but you must be a humble king, and you must look as a king. You must have an air while the patient meets with you for the first time. Your assistants would welcome the patient and take good care of them, but the patient will still look at you as the solver of their puzzle. Nothing and no one can replace your own warm welcome.

Your team...

Your assistants must be welcoming and calm. If you have more than one assistant you should always make sure that they don't have lots of side conversations while working. Patients will most of the time hate this. They might feel the assistants are making fun of them or that they are not concerned with their problems.

Professional procedures...

Nothing is minor when it come to your professional procedures; be sure to follow up on each and every detail personally, leaving nothing to chance.

Infection control is a must. It even starts from serving the welcoming drinks in disposable cups, and ends with taking care of every millimeter in the clinic. Remember, one mistake in this matter can easily cause major problems and illnesses to your patients, your team or yourself.

Documentation and radiographs are a vital part of your work. This includes photography, detailed data recording and organization of patient's files.

If you do not document your cases by photographs, you are actually losing a lot. Those are your real treasures and your big assets that will allow you to become a known, respectable speaker one day. Even the tiniest procedure is worth recording. You should train yourself to give space and time for whoever is capturing photos while you are working.

Publishing is very important too. Years ago, I developed a very simple way to remove excess cement while cementing a fixed bridge. This was published in the most successful prosthetic journal which gained recognition and confidence for myself. Since then I have felt that even the simplest idea is really worth publishing to benefit other dentists around the world, and consequently to benefit mankind as a whole.

Your clothes...

Your clothes must be clean and ironed, and changing the color of your scrubs every now and then is a good idea. Your assistants and team should look presentable and professional as well.

Your teeth...

Although unbelievable, it is a fact that many dentists don't care about their own teeth!

This is a big problem. Your patients will doubt you if you're offering a service you don't have yourself.

One of my patients told me that he used to see a very popular dentist, but had to stop seeing him because he couldn't bear two things about him. First, the way his teeth looked and second, his mouth odor while he was talking.

Oh my God, how can we forget this issue? We should be the models for which our patients look up to. Imagine, a nutritional specialist who's extremely obese, or a debt consultant who's struggling with mountains of debt himself. Would you trust to listen to their advice at all?

Don't let yourself have stained, missing or crowded teeth; always have your teeth in a good shape. After all it is your most important marketing tool.

As for the mouth odor and your body odor, you should be the CLEANEST. We have our patients under our armpits. You know what this means? I don't need to explain. So do your best to deal

with this problem. If it's persistent, then you should be the first to notice it. Avoid close conversations, and wear your mask most of the time.

Treating your patient – as a whole...

When treating your patient's mouth or teeth, you're in fact treating the whole human being.

It's wise to think of the patient and his mouth as the forest and the trees; if you treat a sick tree in a sick forest, you are actually doing nothing. What you should do is deal with the patient as a whole human being. LISTEN to your patients intently and understand their psychological backgrounds. Let them explain their general systemic condition and what medication they are taking. A good medical and psychological background is a must. Moreover, be a good listener and concentrate.

Panorama...

Never touch a case without having a panoramic radiograph in front of you. You would never believe how many cases had asymptomatic pathoses inside their mouths. If you are lucky

and find one, your patient will be eternally grateful and will trust you beyond measure with any decision you make for his benefit, not to mention how this patient will passionately promote for you as a knowledgeable incomparable dentist.

Dealing with VIP patients...

A very interesting story happened to me once. Some VIPs called and almost begged me to see an emergency case for a VIP lady. It was a crowded day, but I accepted for their sake (although deep inside I was also happy that this VIP lady was asking for my help). In the middle of my work, the receptionist came to tell me that she was here, so as usual, I went to the reception area to welcome her and said “let’s start by doing a panoramic x-ray.”

“But it’s only a small procedure,” she replied. I told her that it’s a must for every patient and I never see a case without a panoramic x-ray. She asked in puzzlement, “so if I say no you wouldn’t work in my mouth?” I shot back, “of course, there is no way to start working without an x-ray!” She then asked me if I knew who she was. And I replied, “yes madam, of course.” She asked

me if I wanted her to leave. I told her it was her choice, but if there's no x-ray, there's no work.

She then left the office and I never regretted my decision. Until now, whenever we meet in any social event, she turns her head away to avoid any eye contact. And you know what? Till this day, I am so proud of that incident, as it shows how absolutely professional you could be no matter who your patient is.

I used to get a nightmare of having to treat the president, the king or the queen. How would I tell him or her that a tooth needs to be removed? How would I give their injections? Then I realized something, these important people are just "people" after all, and they're here seeking your help and your wisdom in this specific matter. Treating them professionally and honestly is the biggest VIP treatment I can give them, so I decided to treat all of my patients equally, no matter who they were. It's the right decision, believe me.

A very well-known dentist in his country once told me about a story that happened to him. He was the "KING'S DENTIST". He had a terrible experience having to tell his king that one of his teeth had to be extracted. He told me that he had to talk about how lucky his king was, keeping

all his teeth in place until now. He had to explain how many young patients with lots of missing teeth came to his office and talked about how his king's teeth were in great shape. After a while, the king smiled and said "shoot", so he grabbed the golden chance to say the bad news. To his surprise, the king was very understanding and told him, "I got it the first minute. Do what you have to do." Only then was he able to relax and do his job.

The point you need to remember is that VIP patients are just humans, and in a doctor's office they look at you as the advisor. They came to sit in your chair because they needed you, and they will accept any professional news you give them, good or bad, as long as you give them the solution and promise of relief.

Just be professional and you will gain their respect. As for those who refuse to like the right things, well it's their choice after all, but losing a patient no matter who that patient is doesn't even compare to losing your professional integrity.

Mouth and Nose – a close relationship...

Looking at a panoramic x-ray is very interesting. The more you look, the more you discover. If you were to do it my way, you would start viewing it from top to bottom. I personally feel that a panoramic radiograph is like the Mona Lisa in the eyes of a fan. A very interesting discovery that started between me and an ENT specialist is the nasal cavity. What usually happens is that most dentists concentrate on teeth and jaw bones. If you start by looking at the nasal cavity, you would solve a lot of your patients' general and oral health problems. Simply, in lots of cases, the lower, middle and upper turbinates (conchae) get swollen. This shows on the panoramic radiograph. Once they swell, they get very close to the nasal walls and start to cause postnasal secretions. This is called the "silent drip," as it is going on 24 hours a day without the patient even noticing. It became a part of his life, and he can turn out to be a mouth breather. Most ENT specialists would prescribe antihistamines and deal with it as an "ALLERGY". I hate this expression and I hate what they prescribe, as most of the patients get bored and stop using their medication after a week or so.

The discharge would reach the stomach and cause digestive problems, and may cause an irritable stomach, or what many physicians would call an “irritable” or “nervous” colon. Accordingly, the discharge will cause a big change in the oral cavity’s pH. This will lead to lots of decayed teeth. The patient will have an interrupted sleeping pattern and will have a dry mouth. The situation may worsen and cause reflux. Headaches are also a very common sign. You know that lots of people are used to headaches and have come to live with it as a normal feeling, only when it stops will they start to think about it again.

The discovered and dependable treatment for such a problem involves using minor laser surgery to reduce the turbinates’ size and accordingly stop the discharge from accumulating. It is so effective that it starts improving your patients’ general state of health in a few weeks. It even allows the oxygen to go into your system in its normal quantity. Eye color improves and haloes disappear. The digestive system gets better.

You should always ask your patient about his health and tell him to start by his nose, headaches and digestion. The reaction of most

patients is usually quite funny. They would tell you they are fine and start breathing forcibly from their nose to show you that air is passing easily through. You tell them that this is probably less than 50% of the normal amount of air and oxygen. They should breathe in and then start explaining the previously mentioned symptoms. Most patients start to listen in interest and some of them even get annoyed as they start thinking that you are talking about things that they previously thought were normal.

A funny situation happened to me once when a lady came into my office and I saw the swollen conchae in her panoramic radiograph. I asked her about her nose. She looked at me and screamed, “No I am fine and I just came from the office of an ENT specialist. He ordered a sinus CT and said the sinuses were clear, so stop it.” I insisted on explaining that it was not the sinuses, it was the nose. After half an hour of argument, she agreed to go visit my recommended ENT specialist. He then found out two main problems. First, the enlarged conchae, and second, an enlarged atrophic uvula. He performed surgery to reduce both enlargements and she came back to me thanking me for finally being able to sleep. The uvula is a part of our oral cavity, but we usually forget or neglect

examining its size. It causes sleeping disorders, so you should always remember to look at it.

Dealing with your patient's parafunctional habits...

Now, when you start examining your patient's mouth and teeth, just be QUICK. You already have more than an 80% view from the radiograph. Do you know that you can tell if your patient is a bruxer or a clencher just by looking at the panoramic x-ray? Angular bone resorption and dilatation of periodontal ligaments is obvious and shows on the x-ray. An over erupted wisdom tooth because of a missing opposing is one very important trigger for such destructive habits.

In starting to listen to your patients' oral complaints, you will have to open the subject of parafunctional habits. A very strong example would be chewing gum. My God is that destructive. I remember that in the past, our professors used to prescribe chewing gum as a way for training the chewing muscles and strengthening the joints. This all proved to be totally WRONG. We need to advise against extraoral muscular activities. Our facial and oral

muscles need rest. A one very strange fact concerning our chewing muscles is that they have a very strong memory. You chew gum for a long time then you throw it away. What happens is that your muscles keep doing the same action over and over again even with no gum in place, and you develop bruxing and clenching habits. Those habits result spastic headaches and neck aches, clicking of the joints, abrasion of the teeth, bone resorption, and the list goes on.

Patients usually do not know about their bruxing and clenching problems. They think it is normal, so it does make a difference when you start talking about it. In the latest studies concerning chewing gum, investigators mentioned that you are only allowed a maximum of 15 minutes a day of chewing gum. The funny part of the story is that chewing gum companies keep changing the name of their brands to imply rest and relaxation. I find this to be quite contradictive.

A funny situation oftentimes is when you have a husband watch you work on his wife. When you talk about bruxing and the sounds it exerts during sleep, the husband is so eager to say that he cannot go to sleep because of the noise his wife makes. It is sometimes embarrassing, but most of the time it is funny, and the husband

looks at it as a golden opportunity to sleep well again. Of course, this situation applies to all parafunctional habits like biting nails, eating seeds and nuts, etc.

Generalized presence of pulp stones in several teeth, indicates trauma from occlusion in a patient's mouth. It is very interesting to learn to read such facts. As you may already have noticed now, this book is not involved with treatment modalities. Nevertheless it is worth mentioning that in cases with parafunctional habits, occlusal splints and similar appliances should be a routine part of treatment. In some countries, you could buy it through the internet and form it at home.

I love watching movies. One American movie had a scene involving a date between a man and his ex-girlfriend. They had decided to get back together. He was inviting her for dinner when she grabbed a cigarette and started to smoke. He said, "I thought you quit smoking." She replied, "I did but I started to use chewing gum, which caused me a joint problem. So I went back to smoking." I was fascinated at the correct medical information being said in this conversation. That's not saying smokers don't shift to chewing gum in an attempt to quit smoking. In fact, my

late father did this for a while and in the end he actually quit both.

Charity cases and workers around the block...

As a private practitioner, you're already committed to the well-being of your patients. Moreover, you are the lifesaver, in a matter of speaking, of your patients whether rich or poor. You are made to relieve pain and to improve people's lives. Also, your work needs to speak for you. Word of mouth marketing for your practice is a lot better than brochures and advertisements. It is slower but definitely, in the long run, a lot more effective.

As a dentist, you need to work charity cases. They give you satisfaction, and a good part of your society's patients are from poor people, compared to that of richer people. You would have a greater chance of working with new techniques and mastering them, if you have more cases to do.

What about doing all of that and at the same time gaining the blessings of your free cases? Believe me, it is a great feeling. While you are working for a charity case, some bad ideas would

cross your mind such as skipping a step that you would have rather done in a paid case! Don't. You are building your name and popularity all over your area and city. This will be followed by your country, and finally, internationally.

As I mentioned before, you should be strong in your office first in order to be recognized outside. The international speaker is always preceded by being a national speaker. Here comes the importance of the block and area you are working in. You are surrounded by offices, shops, utility areas, gas stations, pharmacies, etc... Put these people in your mind and heart. Take good care of them, and do free work or discounted work for them. They are your marketers. When a patient is asking for a good dentist, be sure that they will gladly and enthusiastically guide him to you without you asking them to do so. Just give them treatment at your office and then leave them to do the marketing for you.

You should control your area, if you know what I mean. Your office should be famous for offering help to your neighbors. A new look for a worker in a pharmacy nearby would attract lots of customers to your office as patients.

Be a good person from the inside not just a good dentist and the universe will pay you back.

At a certain month when I had very few patients, something very strange happened to me. That month, I had completed several charity cases. A

guys, there is a new car in the market. I think we should all get it.” Everyone started inquiring about the car and about the money required to be paid as a deposit.

Deep inside me, I started to think of the deposit and the deadline to pay. I said “ok let’s go for it,” not really knowing how I am going to collect this amount of money. The deadline for paying was the following Sunday morning. I started to check how much I could afford and had patients paying their fees at that time. Oh my, I found myself short of a few thousand pounds. It was Saturday night when I had another dinner with my friends, and everyone but me was making plans for payments Sunday morning. I told them that I had lots to do the next morning and that I was not sure that I would be able to meet with them.

I returned home at 1:00 a.m. full of disappointment that I would not be able to buy the car I needed. After parking my car, the security guy told me that someone dropped an

envelope in my mailbox. I was so sleepy and sad that my first reaction was to check it tomorrow. Deep inside, I had no interest in the mail. What would it be? A company advertising for its product, or maybe some wedding invitations. I headed towards the elevator, then for no reason, I went back to my mailbox and opened it. And to my surprise, I found the exact amount of money needed for the car deposit. It had a cover letter from a patient of mine who owed me money six months ago. I couldn't believe my eyes. I was shocked and surprised. What made him remember? What made him send it in an envelope tonight? Was this a reward from God for treating charity cases?

The exact reason was never clear to me, yet up to today, I never forgot that incident.

First step to being unique: Treatment Planning

Correct treatment planning is the way to becoming a unique dentist. A good dentist knows how to do dentistry, e.g. prepare and fill teeth etc. A unique dentist knows, more importantly, what should be done and later how it is done. From my point of view, the

diagnostician should be paid even more than the practitioner. So what about having the ability to do both?

You must deal with each and every case as THE CASE. As I mentioned earlier, listening to your patient, viewing the panoramic x-ray and examining his mouth is the routine to be done. But what comes next is the quick correct treatment plan. There is a thin line between giving your patients the feeling that you know what you are talking about, and between making them feel that you are a business oriented practitioner.

You must explain the whole case with a mixture of scientific and simple words. Your patient must feel that you are a well-organized thinker. A time



frame for all the procedures you intend to do is mandatory. An estimate of the treatment cost must be ready in your mind. Also, alternative treatment options must be ready in case any justifiable objections arise. You should start with your preferred treatment option, then your less preferred.

Words of Advice..

Never push your patient to have the work done.

Your role ends after you offer your treatment plans. The patient should be the one to ask for whichever he is convinced with.

Never accept to do a big job if your patient is tight on time.

For many cases, I've done the final steps feeling rushed just a few hours before a patient's flight. Such a tense feeling!

What if the work needed adjustment? What if the patient experienced pain or discomfort while away? What if they go to another dentist abroad who criticized my work?

Rarely accept to discount your plans.

Frequent and fast discount decisions bring about a feeling of low quality. If the word gets out that you are a frequent discounter, it would eventually affect your scientific credibility.

The doctor's office should not be compared to a street fair where you bargain for your merchandise. It is a place for medical services bound by fixed fees. Sometimes though, for a good reason you might have to, just limit keep these times to a minimum.



Professional Ethics

As important as professional ethics are, they really can be summarized in one simple sentence- Being a good human being.

You and your colleagues...

As a rule, always stop your patients from naming their previous dentist.

Whether they did or didn't do it right, or whether you like their work or not, always start with good words about your patient's previous work.



You never know what you can do for this patient until you actually start working. Maybe this patient turns out to be the most uncooperative patient in the world, and it would be very tough to do even the simplest procedure for them.

If your patient starts saying bad words about the previous dentist, stop them. Give the dentist all the excuses you can give. The patient is **ALREADY** in your office, this means that you have been chosen to do the job.

You don't need to be mean to any of your colleagues, even if you, one day, hear that same colleague talking badly about you. Never do the same, just smile and move on, this alone will do the job.

Trust is your most precious commodity...

One of my colleagues once called me asking for help. He said that he would appreciate it if I would be the judge between him and his patient. They had an argument about the work he did in her mouth. I accepted that they came to my office to have a meeting. Out of courtesy, I made this meeting in my non-working time so no one was in the office except the three of us. After examining the patient and listening to both of

them, I reached the point of telling the patient, “I feel that even if my colleague was to place genuine diamonds in your mouth, you still wouldn’t be satisfied, am I right?” She replied, “Yes.” The lady had lost trust in my colleague and we settled that he would reimburse her with some money, and they both agreed. I am mentioning this experience just to prove that if a patient loses trust in his dentist, he would never accept any further treatment, even if it’s correct.

Patient first, money later...

As I said before, “money will come to you, don’t go looking for it.”

With every patient, just think of the job in hand and how to do it perfectly. If you feel you need to repeat a case for any reason, just do it for free. This will be greatly appreciated by your patients and will pay you back with more cases.

The American Dental Association has listed that the minimum amount of acceptable crown lifetime is five years. This means that if you remake a crown after five years, you can ask for a full fee again.

But if before that time a crown you made needed changing, for example in six months or a year, then you are responsible.

Check the case with an open and clean conscience. If it was because of you, just do it for free, but if it wasn't your fault, e.g. an accident or something, you have the choice to charge a full fee (although it is much better if you just ask for the cost price, this would be most appreciated).

You and Your Lab...

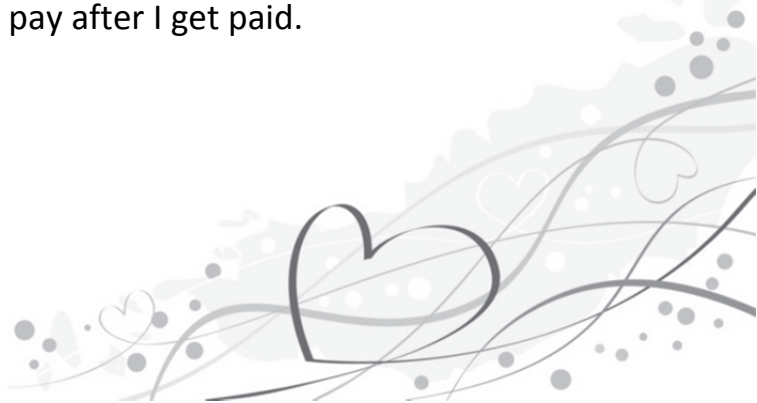
Choose the best lab there is and make friends with them. Trust them and make them trust you. Discuss cases with them. Visit them. Never ask for a discount, as it's their way of earning a living. Accept their criticism as long as it is said in a decent way, learn from them and make them learn from you.

Love your lab technicians as they are a strong part of your success. You know that prosthodontics is the main way for earning money in dentistry, and you need a unique lab to be a unique dentist.

As you know, many of us would face a case of fractured porcelain. It is a nightmare when it is in a crown that happens to be a part of a bridge. I have a great technique for dealing with this problem from my lab technician. He simply suggested that we remove all the porcelain from that retainer of pontic, take an impression, and then have the lab fabricate a porcelain or porcelain fused to metal cover to be cemented on the bridge.

You know what; it worked and now I do it even in the cases which were done by other dentists. My patients don't go through the agony of repeating the whole restoration again and everyone goes home happy.

Also never underestimate the importance of regular payment. I pay my lab every month; it's a beautiful way of dealing with them, and I usually pay after I get paid.





The Maestro

Have you ever asked yourself how can I be the best treatment planner? The answer is simple, be a good prosthodontist.

Whatever your specialty is, you still need to be a good prosthodontist. A prosthodontist is the maestro of treatment planning; learning prosthodontics helps you know how to make your patient look, function and feel better.

You may think that I'm biased because I am a prosthodontist, but that is not the case, as the most basic fact about prosthodontist is that they always care about OCCLUSION even in the simplest procedure.



Learning to work in an edentulous case makes you an artist who is recreating the patient's good

looks, and the hero who is restoring the patient's confidence, function and comfort.

Prostho Tips...

Remember the simple technique I mentioned earlier that I published? It basically involves having a piece of dental floss surrounding a pontic and accordingly holding the bridge under it. After loading the retainers with cement and placing the bridge, you simply hold each side of the floss and move it back and forth, then remove it.

This prevents excess cement from being left under the pontics and between splinted abutments. This would also replace the need for using sharp painful dental probes to do this job. In addition, it would prevent the bridge from slipping from your hands as you are easily and tightly holding it by the floss.

Another prosthodontics' tip that I want to share with you is "SPLINTING". In my presentations, I always like to refer to myself as Mr. Splint.

God created us with 32 teeth. Around the world there is a strong belief that our jaws are only fit to have 28 teeth only. Many suggestions came to

a proposal that it's because of the soft foods we eat starting at childhood and due to some genetic factors. Where is the truth? I don't really care as I only care about the fact that we have simple standing teeth contacting each other in a magical perfect way. Food does not get wedged in between. We have microscopically mobile teeth, which are innervated to adjust beside each other in a great harmony.

When we place a crown, we make sure that it contacts its neighbors in a manner that duplicates our natural teeth. Did you ever ask yourself if the lab-created contacts that were identical to God's creation? My answer is a big NO.

What about complex cases with many crowns involved, hence many lab-created contacts?

A lab-created contact is made in a static situation on a model, while in real life the whole situation is dynamic when the teeth hit each other during chewing.

It's a known fact that neither occlusion nor contacts would ever be identical to our natural teeth. Moreover, in periodontally involved teeth, splinting would distribute stress among several teeth and accordingly reduce trauma. It is also

worth mentioning that due to a different occlusal surface and due to microscopic teeth movement, there would be a slight difference in the timing of the teeth hitting their opposing and thus a big probability of food wedging is to be expected.

Train your logic...

I always tell people that I hated doing things just because I was taught to “do it a certain way.” Everything, including all scientific laws, is subject to change; and smart people are good listeners. In simple terms, the fact is, we will never imitate God’s creation, we can try but it will never be 100% perfect.

Did you ever think of “proprioceptors”; those nerve endings inside periodontal ligaments? This is a miracle in our mouths. Try to get two different patients, one with a full set of natural teeth, and another wearing a full denture. Ask both of them to get their front teeth into an edge to edge relation. Amazingly enough, the one with his natural teeth will do it in a fraction of a second, while the one with the denture will take time to reach it (that is if he could ever do it).

Or try putting a hard object in a patient's mouth, e.g. a metal ball, and ask that patient to bite on it. Once he does it, ask him to bite harder and harder till he says that he can't bite any harder. Ask him "why not? Do you feel any pain?" He would say "no, but I feel that if I bite any harder than this, something bad will happen."

And that is all because of proprioceptors. They direct and innervate our teeth from outside, and inside the bone. And that is why, as much as dental implants are a blessing to us and to our patients, they are also a nuisance as they do lack this miracle of innervations.

A patient with a bridge supported by implants will bite harder than he is supposed to, and could risk breaking the bridge or the implant supporters. Accordingly, with all the progress in the implant world, do you think we were able to imitate God's creation? The answer is again a big NO.

An interesting situation was when a German dentist friend of mine wished to be included in the "Guinness Book of Records". He decided to place 28 implants supporting 28 single crowns in his edentulous patient's mouth. In the beginning, everyone was fascinated and thought highly of him. But if we come to think the right way, there

are lots of drawbacks in this treatment plan. First, each implant space is called the “dead space”. It is so called as it has no blood supply and as we all know: “blood is life and life is blood.” Consequently, he prevented blood from reaching lots of spaces in the patient’s bone. Second, by using simple crowns, he created many lab-created contacts, which could simply be wrong in regards to location and size and would cause food wedging.

A typical example of “things should be done this way” is the nightmare called post and core. We were taught that it is a routine way of thinking to use a post and core in a very badly destructed endodontically treated tooth. I had a case come to me with many post and cores covered by single crowns. The case belonged to a 21-year old girl. The girl had a longitudinal root fracture in her lower lateral incisor. I said to myself, “Oh my God! Why do a post and core in such a tooth while it had all the neighboring incisors restored the same stupid way?” Did you know that again, we do post and cores in a static situation? When we are drilling in the root, we cause microscopic cracks without knowing. Then we build the core and we still need 2 mm of sound tooth structure to fulfill the “ferrule concept” for retaining a crown. If we use a composite “tooth colored”

core, we start tooth preparation thinking that the composite is the tooth and that it is very strong. We forget about the ferrule concept and construct our crown almost at or a little bit under the tooth-composite connection. What will happen is that during chewing, the load will mainly be directed toward the post and core, and would eventually result in a longitudinal fracture.

In a case like this, I would have splinted several crowns together without the need to use post and cores. Load would have then been distributed on the splinted crowns and I would have made sure to reach a good 2 mm of tooth structure subgingivally.

Temporization...

Do you love and care about your patient enough? Do you REALLY put yourself in your patient's shoes each time you make a decision for them?

You should imagine that the exact same procedure will be done to you. If you like it, DO it and FEEL it. If you train yourself to do so, you will care about all details including pain control, and above all: TEMPORIZATION.

Always ask yourself how will your patient get home? Temporization is of GREAT importance in your goal to become a unique dentist. Many dentists do it by depending on their labs, study models and their ideas of model modifications. Others do it intraorally, using autopolymerizing

thinking is that no matter what sophisticated devices you use, even computer-aided productions would NEVER guarantee patients' acceptance and satisfaction.

Some dentists prepare a mock-up to simulate the future permanent work. I think this is great, but from what I learned as a practitioner, you should keep the end result to be the BEST. If you do an excellent temporary restoration, it may even surpass the final restoration. Then you are in a critical situation. I know this sounds awkward and funny, but it is very true.

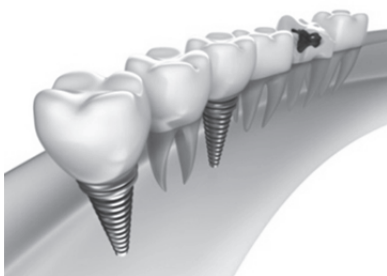




Dental Implants

You might be wondering about this; does every unique dentist have to deal with implants? Can you be unique as a dentist without being involved with implants? The answer YES, to both questions.

Since graduation, dental implant has always been a vital part of my career. As a graduate student from the US, my implant case was the first to be done in the whole school. My professors questioned my guts in getting involved in such an adventure and I took the challenge. I read many implant texts in a very short period of time.



I kept asking private practitioners about their implant experience. My patient had full trust in me, and I don't know why. This patient was a pretty 50-year old edentulous lady. She had an old complete denture. Her main struggles in life were that she could not yell at her children, and she could not sing loudly in church because of her dentures. I explained to her that she was going to be the first case done in school, and she said, "Please do it and it will work out, I'm sure."

A big team was interested in her treatment. The case was completed successfully, and the lady showed up suddenly into our clinic shouting my name loudly and running towards me. She hugged me saying, "you really made me love life again." She had her hair done and she looked extremely pretty and confident.

Since that day, I've known that dental implants are a "marvelous tool for happiness."

I went back home with enthusiasm to start my implant practice. This marks another story in my life; a story full of worries, anxiety, resistance and persistence. Older generations of popular dentists refused the idea. They were doing fine without it and had no energy or interest to start learning about it. Patients were still afraid of having screws drilled into their jaw bones.

Rumors were all over the place that implants “fail and cause cancer”.

I had to deal with all that. However, being and energetic dentists, we were able to change all this. Nowadays, patients come seeking implants and would look down at any dentist who would criticize such a treatment tool.

An interesting decision I made years ago, was show” sponsored by implant companies. In the beginning, no one supported the idea except for a very few friends, but when I started to explain some facts, everyone was fine with it and it was

that we should start with patients who are mainly ladies. If patients are convinced, then their dentists will have to learn about and accept implants. It really worked, and the so called crazy fashion show included a simple but very effective implant presentation.

Another very strange thing I did was invite one of my implant patients, who was a 60-year old lady, to a social-scientific ladies meeting. I gave a presentation on implant success, and had my patient stand beside me and explain what she

went through with implants, and how satisfied she became.

Nowadays, all dentists, whether implantologists or not, must be involved with implants. Accepting dental implants as a good treatment tool is a known fact. Referring patients for implant insertion and restoration is a routine.

The real problem associated with implants, is that most implantologists are fascinated by implants to the extent that they forget about genuine dentistry and most importantly good treatment plans, as compared to abusing implants anywhere and everywhere. Many cases have implants inserted without any real need for its usage. You must be a genuine treatment planner first, and then you can use or advise for implant usage.

A big ethical issue with the use of implants, and what most dentists forget to do, is supplying their patients with a full report, including the type and details of the implants used. If your patient travels or if you are away and the patient develops a problem that needs some work done, it would be a great problem if no one knows what implant type was used. Many cases done abroad came to my office to continue treatment, and I simply couldn't because I didn't know what

type of implant they had. If you ask your patients about it, they usually don't know, and they would most likely have a problem asking their previous dentist due to embarrassment.

Be genuine and you will be unique. Don't use implants unless you really need them. Be good with all the accepted treatment modalities that proved successful through the years.

Endodontics is a very important example. Many authors are pushing for replacing any endodontically problematic tooth with implants as a dependable line of treatment. Please don't go with their beliefs. A natural tooth, or even a natural root, is a "TREASURE" that you are wasting easily.

All implants and relevant researches are aiming to even reach a resemblance to natural teeth. Then, you come and waste the treasure and replace it with an artificial substitute.

All post graduate programs in all specialties are very much concerned with implants, to the degree that they forget to make their candidates learn and master this specialty, just to go for the money-making business of dental implants.

In the world of dental implants, and being one of the pioneers, at least in my continent, I urge you

to be realistic and use the “kis law”. The kis law with one “s” originally meant “keep it simple”. The people who saw the extensive mishaps with implants urged you to go with the “kiss law” with double “s”, meaning “keep it simple stupid”!

Simplicity is beauty, simplicity is authenticity; it’s the greatest way to achieve the best real life results.

Once, I attended a lecture presented by a renowned speaker. He performed many surprises to his patient, and he showed unbelievable photos.

Fantastic 3-years follow up was all - to my surprise and shock - to have one interdental papilla grow 1.5 mm!

Oh my God. My comment was that at least 99% of patients would NOT care about papillae, and that it could have been done in a shorter period of time using some prosthodontic approaches and good temporary restorations.

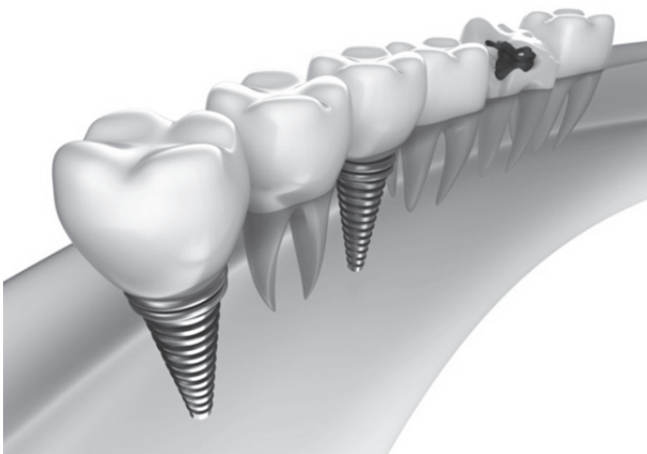
The other big problem with that presentation was the extensive editing made to its pictures, using graphics software.

Simply, he was a liar, no, a big liar. The implant world is full of liars who actually make you feel

very tiny compared to them, just to discover later on that the real artist was the graphic designer they hired!

Don't feel tiny. Don't go for extensive surgeries to reach perfection. Many times, simpler procedures give your patients more than satisfactory results. Simple procedures combined with excellent knowledge make you unique and an excellent practitioner.

And what about bone quality and the number of materials and ways related to it? More than half of the cases having these procedures performed and used caused lots of agony, and needed long time to have a definitive outcome. It's not that I am against those materials or procedures. I am just a big believer of the "kis law", it works.





You & the Others

They say you can't have it all; choosing one specialty in dentistry makes sure of that.

Dental specialties are interdependent, not opposed. If you think about it in the right way, you can and you will have it all.

Of course there are some opposing points of view or ways to deal with professional problems, which sometimes cause lifetime arguments.

Everybody thinks highly of themselves, that's for sure, and each specialty would stick to their own opinions.



For example; if you have a food wedging space between two molars, a pocket will develop. A Periodontist would treat it surgically and medically, while a prosthodontist would simply remove the cause

by closing the space, which would probably let the pocket heal by itself: simple.

Orthodontists...

Orthodontists consider themselves the elite practice general dentistry because it needs concentration and dedication. Therefore, making good relations with the orthodontists around you will get you a lot of referrals, as you too should refer to them any orthodontic case coming to your office.

Never work in that field unless you are a specialist. At some point you will have a very strong cooperation with one or two excellent orthodontists. This is more than enough for you regarding referrals to and from them.

Many general practitioners try to get involved in orthodontics. They attend a course or two and start practicing it. This is a big mistake, I must say. Correct orthodontic treatment is not only having front teeth looking “RIGHT” or “BEAUTIFUL”, it’s much more than that.

Pedodontists...

Lately, this specialty is going through a lot of changes. Years ago it used to wrap around child management, while nowadays lots of cases are done under general anesthesia.

Again, don't get involved in such cases unless you are a specialist. It is a time consuming treatment and the money return is not comparable to adult treatment. So if you don't have a pedodontist in your clinic, it is important for you to develop a strong cooperation with one or more pedodontists around.

Oral Surgeons...

Many dentists think that dentistry is mainly oral surgery; this is not true at all. Oral surgery is a major branch of dentistry which requires excessive training, study and skill to be able to undergo surgeries. It also takes a lot of caution and involves a lot of risk.

How many cases resulted in nasoantral fistulas while simply extracting an upper first molar? The dentist is very skilled in extraction, but very ignorant in appreciating how close the molar is to the maxillary sinus. Furthermore, he is not

prepared or knowledgeable enough to deal immediately with such complications.

How many implant cases left the patient with a numb mandible or with an implant pushed into the maxillary sinus? How many sinus lift cases failed, leaving the patient with severe or chronic sinus infections?

On one occasion, an elevator broke from a dentist leaving its tip inside the socket while trying to extract an impacted wisdom tooth. He was ignorant enough that he did two things wrong. First, he did not inform his patient. Second, he did not even care to do an x-ray postoperatively to check the whereabouts of the fractured tip. What he did do, was he prescribed antibiotics to the patient and assured him that everything was okay.

The patient then suffered for weeks until he had to go to another dentist, who started his examination by taking a panoramic x-ray, and hence found the tip and removed it.

Tell me, how did this patient feel about the first dentist? Where were his ethics?

I had a case once showing an impacted mandibular wisdom tooth traveling all the way down on the panoramic radiograph. On clinical

examination, I could even feel a projection under the body of the mandible. What I did, was I immediately referred the case to an oral surgeon without even trying to touch it. His recommendation was to leave the tooth there and never to touch it until it starts causing symptoms. He also recommended having routine panoramic radiographs for the patient every six months. It's been 15 years now, and the case is still healthy and stable. If I was to play the hero and attempt to extract it, I would have probably ended up fracturing the mandible, with all the complications that follow.





Controversies

Working With General Anesthesia...

What a great, simple, and difficult procedure in the same time!

And to be able to undergo it yourself, you must start by assisting experienced dentists in such a procedure. Watch carefully, and always concentrate on your patient's welfare.

Watch the anesthesiologist to see how he deals with the patient. Never leave the patient before they can reply in complete consciousness.

I usually visit my patients in the hospital room before I start working in order to reassure them and their companions. Then, I wait for the staff to bring



the patient to the operating room. I never work alone; always accompanied by my team.

A big issue is how and when to get your fees. Elegant dentists MUST show their patients and companions that they MAINLY care about the case and not the MONEY. The money will come to you, don't worry.

Be the master of the operating room, the maestro. Be cool and funny, yet firm in executing each and every step. It's easy to deal with a sleeping patient, but for us as dentists, we need our patients' cooperation. For example, to "bite down" or something, you can't have this luxury when dealing with general anesthesia. Accordingly, in our world, unlike general surgeons, we prefer our dental units and conscious patients, unless it is crucially needed, the other way around.

Composites...

What a strange dentist I am! You don't have to agree with me all the time; actually I know that many practitioners will simply disagree with me in what I'm going to say now. Moreover, companies producing such materials will definitely hate me.

Here it goes... I hate composites as filling materials!

I have my reasons of course. When they started becoming available and popular, it was the “first generation”. I don’t know how far they reach now, something like the “ninth or tenth generation”? First let’s analyze the word “generation”, shall we? It only means that each previous generation had a serious defect that was improved in the following one. So, what about the work done with them?

Composites are not at all user friendly. If you do not perfect each step, something will go wrong. But what if you were to perfect it? Will it be compared to a ceramic veneer? Never!

Bonding agents became so strong that they could crack a tooth with a shrinking composite. You do not have to agree with my way of thinking, but please put in mind that we need long lasting, user friendly, and dependable restorative materials to depend on.

I know that patients are not that fond of amalgam fillings, however its life expectancy and ease of application definitely surpasses composites, as any leakage within the tooth-composite connection would definitely lead to

pulp involvement. Let's not get fascinated with everything that is marketed to us. Photos before and after can be too good to be true.



Challenges

Family & friends...

Family members and close friends are a double-ended blade. They are sometimes a blessing, and other times a big problem.

you looking for extra care, and some others would come looking for discounts, or even – believe it or not – free treatment.

My late father was a great dentist. However, he had a problem asking for fees

of kindness. Still, many of them felt embarrassed

because he was offering free treatment, and others felt that he was not doing a great job - even though he was - because it was for free.



It is a big dilemma, fees or no fees, discounts or no discounts, you end up feeling that you can't

The answer is not as simple as it might sound. It's limiting your free treatment to a very small

Be sure to make it a "good discount" not a "great discount", as a great discount makes you look, in a way, like a crook. Moreover, it diminishes your prestige and gets most people to lose appreciation of your work. Expensive dentists are looked at highly under the impression that they know what they are doing.

Cheap dentists on the other hand, are sometimes seen as looking for popularity and quantity, rather than quality, which lowers the degree of their reputation and credibility.

During the years, I found out that quality is a lot more rewarding than quantity. You will be rewarded both morally and financially by focusing in a few greatly done cases with expensive fees, rather than the opposite.

Be an expensive, great dentist; ask for high fees. Don't worry if you lose some patients, you will gain more from your loving ones.

Of course as mentioned before, you will care for free charity cases, but will be expensive in asking for fees from patients who can pay.

Losing patients and work rates...

Nobody is perfect. Never feel desperate if you lose a patient. It happens and will always happen to all dentists around the world. You might lose concentration every once in a while, or you might be so busy one day that you can't give a case the one hundred percent you are used to. Sometimes, it's just because of a bad lab work. It can be any other reason, but bottom line; you are just a human, we all are. Take it as a lesson, embrace it and try to start over, while telling yourself it's for the good of another colleague.

Also, please know that you will sometimes experience low patient rates. Don't worry, it will come back. Always have faith in God and your work.

In my country, there are some known times of the year when low rates are expected. During those times, I put in mind one thought; it's time for relaxation to be able to go on with my hectic schedule throughout the year.

I still remember my “FIRST PATIENT” who was my cousin. I was trembling while working on him. Actually, he was the only patient I had in the first week I started my practice. Always remember your first patient, and then smile when you’re actually having a flow of patients. You will be thankful that you started to be a part of the dental field.

Dentistry and Stress...

It is a known fact that the highest rate of suicide between professionals in U.S.A. lies amongst lawyers and dentists. Please do not fall for this. Love your profession because of a simple reason, it is “LOVEABLE”; take it as your hobby as well as a way of living. Of course you have hobbies like swimming, football, etc., but dentistry is also one of my hobbies. I enjoy treating a case as much as I enjoy playing and watching soccer, which is my favorite hobby.

Times of stress will pass, but beware of having your patients feel it. They will get worried and will doubt your treatment. Make sure to have frequent vacations and to experience meditation, it’s a wonderful way to clear your mind and go on with life stress-free.

Give yourself some time alone every day. Just think about nothing, even for just ten minutes. Believe me; it gives you a lot of relaxation.

Many days and nights will pass when a young dentist fails to fall asleep out of worrying about a case he did or will do. Watch a funny movie, I mean a really funny movie. Do not add to your stress by watching horror or suspense movies during these stressful nights.





Now will you be a unique dentist?

Now that you've finished reading, do you get the idea? Did you catch the contagion of my great love to dentistry?

Did you warm up to the wonderful journey you're about to start? And picked up even a thread, one thread of hope?

If so, then I am more than satisfied now that I have shared my thoughts and experience I gained from my career, and contributed in laying even one block in yours.

Maybe I concentrated on private practice, but I truly think that a dentist is made to treat patients' teeth. It is all about the practice.

This does not mean that all dental researchers, teachers, and community surgeons are of less importance. On the contrary, they do supply us with evidence-based information to guide us through the way.

I hope you gained some insight about my way of seeing dentistry. I know that you will have your own way of thinking, which might be even better than mine, and one day after years of sailing in the waters of dentistry, I'd love to read about your own thoughts and experiences too.

Now, if you ask me, "what would you have chosen to be if you were not to be a dentist?" I would definitely say: A DENTIST.

I say this with all pride and joy, famous or not famous, rich or not rich. If in the end of the line, you found yourself filled with sheer gladness and satisfaction that you chose the way you've chosen in the beginning of your life, then you are the most successful human being to ever grace the Earth.

You are lucky to be a dentist, but do your best to be "A Unique Dentist."

