



## The Costs of Implant Treatment

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The challenge we face is containing costs while meeting a variety of patient needs. The inventor of the osseointegrated root form implant, Dr. P. I. Branemark advises, “Bring the cost of care down so that it is available to all ... (first) focus on a minimum level of care that can improve the lives of patients.” (1) Those operating on a predetermined treatment model do not understand the real costs patients experience with extensive dental treatments.

If a dentist quickly offers his “**favorite treatment**”, it is likely that **the patient’s cost** may not be his first concern.

- **The complete costs of major dental treatment:**
- **Biologic cost** – the vital structures which need to be sacrificed or changed to accomplish the treatment
- **Patient time, inconvenience and discomfort** – tolerance for the entire treatment
- **Future maintenance and liability** – risks the patient will need to accept
- Finally, the **actual fee** reflecting the expense of construction and the dentist’s profit

Overlooking any of these “costs” can adversely affect the patient’s experience and label an otherwise successful treatment as unsatisfactory. I believe that consideration of the four costs must be included in the treatment planning process, and that the patient is not fully informed without disclosure of all.

The first cost control is minimizing the number of implants needed. One molar implant crown to avoid a partial denture or adding an implant under a free end of the removable partial denture to make it more solid are lower cost treatments which often have dramatic results.

I tell my patients that saving some treatable mandibular teeth or “nature’s implants” can be supplemented with one or more dental implants to actually strengthen the weaker teeth. (2)

**An implant assisted overlay partial denture** using both teeth and implants is perhaps a safer method for control of excess forces where bruxism was likely a factor in the preceding tooth loss. (3) Removable partial dentures with implants are under-used considering that they are particularly cost effective and greatly reduce treatment time.

The simplicity of the **implant overdenture** using tissue and implant support lies in the freedom to place the implant anywhere under the denture base; whereas fixed implant modalities need the implant in the far more precise positioning and angulations of the original tooth root. The availability of more ideal boney areas lessens the need for bone grafting. This allows the cost savings of fewer procedures and taking advantage of a smaller number of uncompromised implants.

### *Sources*

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