



Crippling Myths about Dental Implants

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Non-scientific assumptions about dental implant treatment are held and repeated by dentists to their patients. Dr. George Zarb, a pioneer in North American implantology, writes, “The integrity of purpose and scientific rigor that characterized the original osseo-integration clinical research has been largely discarded as passé.” (1) The resulting blind spot, as described in the book *Vital Lies, Simple Truths - The Psychology of Self-Deception*, diverts our attention from being the impartial advisor the patient needs us to be. (2)

I believe these common assumptions lack an evidence-base:

Implants are a good replacement for natural teeth.

Studies do not show implants having greater survival rates than natural teeth. (3) A more true statement is that dental implants are an acceptable treatment for having no teeth!

My dentist said I don’t have a good mouth for wearing dentures.

One of the excellent studies done at McGill University concludes that clinical assessment of the denture supporting tissue areas is a poor indicator of potential denture satisfaction. (4)

Implants are expensive!

Certainly not true if one or two implants make an unwearable removable partial denture (RPD) or complete denture (CD) become functional. (5)

Implants versus dentures?

Simply the wrong question. Implants can be used effectively with natural teeth either as bridgework or overlay RPDs. (6)

Patients want “permanent” teeth.

Sounds reasonable but just not true! A literature review finds that the vast majority of patients are well-satisfied with their maxillary CD. (7) True, the mandibular CD is problematic due to well documented increased bone resorption (8) and instability reduced chewing efficiency. (9) Yet the less costly (in time, in hassle, in fee and in maintenance) removable option of implant overdenture (IOD) addresses both problems of the CD while providing a highly satisfying appliance. (10)

Implant bars are an upgraded treatment over implant snaps.

Harder Bars have four negatives: high cost, space intensive, difficult to clean and greater maintenance compared to modern snaps. Even greater space is taken by milled bars. I find that esthetics are always impacted when an

altered tooth position is used to compensate for the bar and superstructure. (11) A literature review shows an increased risk of instability of an upper CD when opposed by a mandibular bar-supported IOD. (12)

Sources

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