

## Treating the patient or the disease?

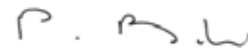
In the management of the periodontal patient, evaluation occurs at the patient, tooth and site level. The weight given to each component depends on the clinician's education and training as well as the medical model orientation of the practitioner.

The clinician may opt for a global, patient-centred approach. The key phrase for this approach is 'to care'. Complete patient evaluation requires determination of all environmental and behavioural factors that may influence the outcome of treatment. Systemic factors such as diabetes will be discussed with the patient. Smokers will be counselled. Patients will be educated for optimal oral hygiene. This requires from the clinician listening, empathy and communication skills.

The alternative is the disease-oriented approach. Here the key phrase is 'to cure'. The goal is to restore the function and aesthetics of periodontally diseased teeth. Surgery is often indicated to reach these objectives. For example, surgery is necessary in furcation defects to allow access to the lesion, or in the anterior region to meet with the aesthetic requirements. This requires a good sense of observation, clinical competency, and technical and surgical skills.

A periodontist should ideally meet the profile of a health care provider with surgical skills.

To care, to cure or both. It is up to you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Baehni'.

Pierre Baehni  
Geneva