



Threats and Chances

'Periodontology is blurring out' ... this is a statement I recently heard at an international conference. This is a major concern in some countries, where currently specialists are facing the fact that the number of referrals for periodontal therapy is decreasing. Moreover, implant therapy is now firmly embedded within many general practices, and there are even some Endo specialists who also appear willing to perform minimally invasive periodontal surgery.

Indeed, there are many threats, and in some countries Periodontics is suffering because, sadly, the extraction of a tooth and the provision of a simple removable bridge/denture attracts a higher fee than even the most sophisticated regenerative treatment ... so much for progress!

Then there are other countries, where the number of Perio specialists will further decline in the near future, and younger graduates are more inclined to place fancy implants than attempt to retain natural teeth. What a disaster, one may think, but fear not, times will change. This year in Germany alone about 1 million implants have been placed, and we already know that about 28–30% will develop periimplantitis. Then there is increasing scientific evidence that periodontal health is a prerequisite for general health. Who in the dental profession knows better than we do? Are all our patients aware of this link? Periodontal Medicine (periodontal manifestations of systemic diseases) – a field of increasing importance in a (Western) population that is ageing every day – is a unique chance for us, but are we prepared?

Now is the time to develop a common global vision for Periodontology. This is an opportunity! 'I have a dream...' said Martin Luther King in 1963.

Let us dream – that in the near future we have common educational standards for our students, who will learn about the importance of Periodontology, not only for oral, but also for general health and the intimate relationship between our specialty and systemic disease.

Let us dream - that in the near future every patient in the population knows about the importance of periodontal health and that periodontal specialists are the true experts to correctly diagnose and treat these diseases.

Let us dream - that in the near future all Chief Dental Officers in our countries are aware of the huge responsibility they have not only for the profession but also for the health of the population and that Periodontology is acknowledged as a speciality in its own right throughout Europe and even on a global scale.

What can we do to ensure that this dream becomes reality? Martin Luther King's famous speech initiated a common effort. Therefore let us use these threats to join forces, and combine all our intellectual capacity to act in a joint (multinational) effort to sharpen our profile. At the same time let us enthuse and educate our young students, so that they share our vision and enthusiasm for this specialty.

So common threats will create common opportunities and help us to shape the future of our field! Let us dream, be enthusiastic and act together!


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