



A Provocative New Text

My dental education exposed me to several assertively proposed clinical rituals, professional rites of passage that would guarantee excellence of my technical performance and optimal treatment outcomes, even if the scientific backing could be far from compelling. It took a few years of independent clinical practice and coping with my career's teaching responsibilities to recognize that a great deal of what I had learned—and indeed, subsequently taught—lacked an ecological intraoral context; and that treating an absent or missing single anterior tooth with a fixed three-unit prosthesis ignored the plain fact that enamel is not a renewable resource. The operational rationale was that while time-dependent concerns regarding pulpal and gingival responses to the recruited abutment teeth were not readily predictable, one could always revise the original treatment as needed.

The arrival of the adhesive dentistry era provided an exciting scope for alternative and more ecologically prudent ways to restore teeth and facilitate provision of replacements. However, osseointegration and its apparent ease at providing a tooth

root analog quickly eclipsed serious reliance on the adhesive approach. This preprosthetic surgical intervention rapidly embraced by sister specialty groups was enthusiastically advanced as a quasi-panacea, irrespective of the fact that proposed host bone sites were not always ideal candidates for implant location. Numerous ingenious techniques were developed to go on justifying routine implant management, even in young patients whose age-determined morphologic features needed thorough consideration. It became clear that a populist assignment of implant management to the top of a hierarchical treatment list for the missing single tooth was misleading, and that a far more measured and ultimately prudent way of offering patients a best treatment choice, especially in an age-dependent context, was required.

Matthias Kern has undertaken this challenge very convincingly in his new text, and the Journal is pleased to offer this Invited Commentary to describe why he wrote his book.

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