



Observations on the AO Tenth

William R. Laney, DMD, MS, Editorial Chairman

The 10th Annual Meeting of the Academy of Osseointegration is history. The approximately 1,370 persons who were in attendance in Chicago had the opportunity to listen to experienced clinicians show and tell of treatment options and results involving patients with edentulous or partially edentulous mouths, as well as those needing only single-tooth replacements. The effects of smoking on treatment, the use of bone grafting for severely resorbed residual ridges, and computer utilization for planning treatment and facilitating patient education were among other topics presented to expand the knowledge base of listeners.

Those wanting more informal, concentrated doses of discourse on specific subjects had five limited attendance lecture options from which to choose. Record numbers of table clinics and poster presentations provided graphic and visual displays involving a broad spectrum of implant-related clinical and scientific topics. From this participant's viewpoint, the oral research presentations were some of the best heard at any annual meeting to date and, altogether, represented probably the strongest session of this meeting. It is unfortunate that it was necessary to limit these to 10, but the time constraints of programming for this section would not permit more.

As has become Academy tradition, the meeting organization and conduct were most effective. In what has actually become a full 2/-day meeting, a balance of scientific and social programming was provided for member/guest edification and pleasure. At this meeting, adequate time for participant interaction and the facility to expedite exhibitor exposure and banter were provided. However, the trek from the lecture hall to exhibit hall was somewhat circuitous and remote, oftentimes compromising the necessary breaks provided for conversation, refreshment, and exhibit viewing.

Probably the most glaring shortcoming and disappointment of the 10th annual conclave was the creeping cancer of podium commercialism which seems to be crowding science for audience consumption. While it is impossible to completely eliminate reference and identification in addressing clinical/laboratory procedures and techniques, the rather blatant promotion of particular systems in the general sessions of this meeting was offensive, unnecessary, and, at times, most unprofessional. Hopefully, this is not a trend for the future. Over the 10 years of this Academy's annual meetings, the participants have been well exposed to currently available hardware and its respective advantages and disadvantages. May it now become possible to emphasize science and statistically accepted analyses of data accumulated from the design and use of plain cylinders, threaded cylinders, or

whatever design, be they hydroxyapatite-coated or surface-treated in another fashion. There is an excellent and necessary forum for commercial interests, and that is the exhibit hall; let us seek their presence there and encourage intellectual pursuits in the lecture hall.

A second concern is the seeming organizational apathy of Academy members as again this year, in growing numbers, they elected to not participate in their annual business meeting. This meeting is designated for the necessary conduct of Academy business and for the recognition of achievement by members, individually and collectively. In an organization of over 3,000 members, it is regrettable that only 2 to 3 percent have interest and concern enough to participate in the affairs of operation.

A recent external review of Academy operations has suggested that the organization is in the "late growth" or "early maturity" stage of its institutional life cycle. Continuing membership growth, increasing annual meeting programming and attendance, and a promising but fledgling Foundation are positive signs of an evolving successful professional organization. As has been the case in the Academy's organizational development, there are also growing pains in realizing a balanced annual meeting program menu. While there may be a concern here and there, certainly the net results to date suggest that the Academy's annual meetings are on a most positive course and will continue to attract interested professionals as long as scientific programming remains on the cutting edge and in the best interests of its members.