



New Training Guidelines for Basic Implant Placement

The IDIA Advisory Board

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For the past several years, abbreviated surgical training courses (1-3 days) have often been promoted as being fully adequate to begin placing implants. Course materials frequently claim that implant surgery is simple and profitable. These questionable marketing claims were probably intended to motivate dentists to attend these courses; however, the claims are misleading. Weekend courses do not cover the appropriate areas of study to meet the legal standard of care for implant placement. And as most experienced implant surgeons can attest, implant surgery is never simple, and it does not become profitable until the practitioner is well beyond the learning curve.

A significant increase in malpractice claims and litigation, as well as interviews and research prompted by complaints from patients and health care providers, indicates that inadequate training is one of the factors contributing to increasing implant failures and complications across the country.

Ideally, dental organizations would establish a standard, or guidelines, for the minimum amount of training required for implant surgery. However, since dental organizations have not yet promulgated standards for training, the only feasible alternative for protecting patients is an industry-wide standard for company-sponsored surgical training courses. Therefore, as indicated in previous publications, the IDIA has held several

meetings over the past few years with industry leaders and malpractice defense attorney, Arthur W. Curley, JD, to discuss the need for training guidelines, as well as concerns that the industry could be facing a crisis of confidence in the future as a result of the increased failures and complications.

In 2007, the IDIA published recommendations for training guidelines to meet the legal standard of care. These guidelines were based on those already established in the U.K., the collective experience of several surgical specialists and restorative dentists, and the knowledge and understanding of the legal ramifications in the United States.

Although these guidelines were effective in terms of raising awareness of the importance of more comprehensive training, it became apparent that it was necessary to expand the scope of the guidelines. It has never been our intention to dictate the structure of CE courses, or to establish a specific curriculum for surgical implant training programs. However, without course objectives and the recommended minimum amount of time that should be devoted to the various areas of study recommended, it is difficult for course designers and participants to properly evaluate whether programs meet the legal standard of care.

This is evidenced by the plethora of outlines and brochures for abbreviated courses that began including topics such as complications and failures, with only an

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hour devoted to those topics. In addition, it appears that a significant percentage of complications and failures are the result of improper case selection and lack of risk recognition, indicating that these topics must be covered more extensively in training courses.

Industry-Wide Training Guidelines

Therefore, it was determined that the guidelines needed to be expanded, and the IDIA initiated discussions with industry leaders last fall to discuss our concerns, as well as a number of issues that complicate the overall training situation. For instance, some of the implant companies provide training programs, and others sponsor courses provided by independent clinicians and/or training centers. There are also abbreviated courses included at the annual meetings of various organizations, where the implant companies are exhibitors, but not directly “sponsoring” abbreviated training courses. Unfortunately, there are also situations where company logos have been used to promote abbreviated courses, without the authorization of the implant company.

The IDIA is encouraged by the fact that most of the major implant companies, not only participated in these meetings, but agreed to support the development of guidelines for basic implant placement. We commend the following companies for their commitment to protecting patients and preserving the integrity of implant dentistry: Astra Tech, Biomet 3i, Neoss, Nobel Biocare, Straumann, and Zimmer.

It should be noted that the IDIA and the companies participating in these meetings believe that ideally, training guidelines should be developed by dental organizations. However we also recognize that this is not likely to happen in the near future and that it is necessary to act now in order to reduce the number of failures and complications that are resulting from inadequate training.

The group also believes that the curriculum for surgical training courses should be developed by universities, professional educators and organizations that focus primarily on education. These individuals and organizations are ultimately qualified to determine the teaching methods and detailed course outlines necessary to meet course objectives.

The IDIA's focus is resolving the “weekend warrior” problems in the United States, whereas other organizations take training guidelines to another level. For instance, the International Team for Implantology (ITI) organized a conference in 2007 to standardize the application of the SAC Classification, which categorizes implant procedures into three levels of difficulty – Straightforward, Advanced and Complex – and then published an entire textbook on the subject earlier this year.

The IDIA believes that with the support of implant companies adopting training guidelines on an industry-wide basis, and withholding sponsorship of training programs that are not in compliance with the guidelines, the number of abbreviated courses being promoted as adequate training to begin placing implants will be dramatically reduced.

Therefore, a committee was organized to expand the scope of the guidelines. The committee included oral and maxillofacial surgeons, periodontists, and a restorative dentist, representing perspectives from both academia and private practice. The committee members who contributed to the development of these guidelines are:

Arthur W. Curley, J.D – Malpractice defense attorney, Assistant Professor Arthur A. Dugoni School of Dentistry in San Francisco

Robert London, DDS - Director of Graduate Periodontics, University of Washington School of Dentistry, Director of The London Institute

Dan Marinic, DDS - Private practice, restorative, cosmetic and implant dentistry, Evanston, Illinois

Faisal Quereshey, MD, DDS - Residency Program Director, Case Western Reserve University School of Dental Medicine, private practice, oral, maxillofacial and cosmetic surgery, Medina, Ohio

Jeffery Thomas, DDS - Fellow, International Team for Implantology, private practice, periodontics and implants, New Bern, North Carolina

Stephen Wheeler, DDS - Secretary, Executive Board, Academy of Osseointegration, private practice, oral and maxillofacial surgery and implants, Encinitas, California



Implementation of the Guidelines

The implant companies participating in this initiative have agreed to the following recommendations for implementation of the guidelines:

1. Companies should send the guidelines to all clinicians and training centers that provide surgical training course that these companies sponsor.
2. Companies should require all clinicians and training centers that request sponsorship of surgical training courses to submit all promotional materials prior to agreeing to sponsor the course or permit the company's logo to be used.
 - a) These materials should not state or imply that an abbreviated course enables the clinician to immediately begin placing implants.
 - b) Further, promotional materials for abbreviated courses should not state or imply that the courses are "complete" or that they cover advanced or complex procedures.
3. Companies should review all course outlines submitted for sponsorship to determine which sections of the guidelines are covered in the course. Course instructors should be aware of the sections of the guidelines that are not covered so that they can inform course participants of any additional training recommended.
4. Companies should withhold sponsorship of abbreviated courses that are not in compliance with the guidelines and/or if promotional materials make questionable representations that would lead course participants to believe that the course is sufficient training for them to immediately begin placing implants and/or provide advanced or complex treatment.
5. Companies should request that instructors for basic surgical courses distribute the guidelines to all course participants.
6. Companies should also request that instructors announce to course participants that the course is a basic course and inform participants of which sections of the guidelines are covered and which sections are not.

In addition, participating companies are encouraged to make the guidelines available to sales reps so that they can provide them for any non-surgical dentists who approach them about placing implants or the appropriate training recommended. These companies are also encouraged to inform their customers of the availability of the guidelines through various marketing communications, such as company newsletters and websites.

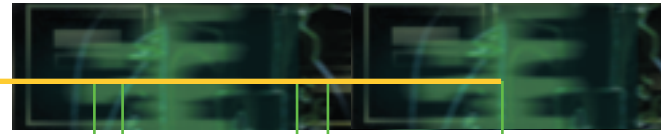
Professional and Public Awareness of the Guidelines

The IDIA is committed to increasing professional awareness of the guidelines, as well as public awareness of the importance of selecting an implant surgeon with adequate training. Some of the steps the IDIA plans to take to increase awareness and distribution of the guidelines, in addition to this newsletter, are as follows:

1. The IDIA plans to contact the other implant companies to invite them to participate in the distribution of and compliance with the guidelines.
2. The IDIA plans to contact training organizations/centers to make them aware of the importance of compliance with the guidelines.
3. The IDIA plans to contact implant organizations to discuss the importance of supporting industry-wide minimum training guidelines.
4. The IDIA plans to contact the CE departments of various dental schools to discuss the possible development of a course that meets all recommended areas of study in the guidelines.
5. The IDIA will provide additional information about the guidelines on our website for professionals (idia.org), as well as the ability to download a PDF of the guidelines.
6. The IDIA will also provide information about the importance of selecting a doctor with adequate training and experience to provide implant treatment in "lay" terms on our website for consumers (MissingTeeth.org).

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We encourage all surgical specialists to visit our website to become more informed about the guidelines and how they are being presented to the dental profession, as well as the general public.

Special Acknowledgment

The IDIA is grateful to and commends the participating implant companies for their support of the guidelines initiative. This is a clear demonstration of their commitment to protecting patients and preserving the integrity of implant dentistry. It is truly remarkable that six competitive companies are joining together in a cooperative effort, rising above their individual company interests, to address these issues and take steps to resolve them.

We feel it is also important to acknowledge the fact that Astra Tech and Biomet 3i have supported this initiative from its inception. Although neither company has provided, or plans to provide their own surgical training programs, company Presidents, Scott Root, Astra Tech, and Steve Schiess, Biomet 3i, recognized the importance of industry support of training guidelines for the benefit of the patients, the profession and the industry.

Melker Nilsson, President of Neoss, has been distributing the original guidelines since they were published and has also provided the invaluable perspective of the smaller companies during our meetings. We also want to acknowledge Jim Frontero, President of Straumann, for supporting industry cooperation to protect the patients, and its philosophy with the ITI, which has been to properly train implant surgeons.

Under the leadership of company President Harold Flynn, Zimmer had already begun to raise the bar with high quality

university-based education programs and through Zimmer Institute, prior to becoming an active participant in the development of the new guidelines.

Finally, the IDIA would like to acknowledge the change in philosophy at Nobel Biocare. It is no secret that the IDIA has been Nobel's most vocal critic in the past, as a result of what we saw as their promotion of abbreviated training courses and aggressive pursuit of general dentists as surgical customers. This business strategy originated with the former CEO and corporate headquarters, so when the company changed CEO's in 2007, their philosophy also changed. The U.S. company was able to implement strategies more appropriate for this market and this has been a critical factor in promoting industry-wide compliance with the guidelines.

Kevin Mosher, North American President has made it clear that their objective is to "expand the market for dental implants, not sell implant kits, and that it stands to reason that the best way to expand the market is to increase the number of dentists referring to specialists..." The evidence of this new philosophy is clear; the number of basic surgical training courses supported by Nobel, scheduled for the entire year (2009) is only 36, compared to 351 in 2007.

It is our hope that all implant companies, as well as dental organizations and training organizations, will join this effort to ensure the safety of patients and maintain high success rates with implant procedures. Such collaboration between the dental profession and the implant industry could prevent potential problems with loss of consumer confidence in implant dentistry, which would certainly occur if malpractice claims and litigation were to continue to increase at a significant rate. To this extent, the IDIA is inviting all implant companies, dental organizations and training organizations to contact us for additional information about participating in this important initiative.

