



CLINICAL UPDATE:

Implant Patient Evaluation and Selection

The patient selected for implant treatment greatly affects the implant's success. In addition to choosing implant candidates based on their medical and dental qualifications, patients should also be examined for their psychological indications and contraindications. Doctors should select patients whom they believe will be satisfied with their prostheses psychologically, esthetically, and functionally.

Medical Evaluation

During the medical evaluation, we review the patient's medical history and their pre-surgical work-up. We look for absolute contraindications such as recent myocardial infarction, pregnancy, uncontrolled diabetes, acute alcohol and drug abuse, and therapeutic or disease-related immunosuppression. We also keep an eye out for relative contraindications such as allergies, malignancies, use of corticosteroids, and debilitating or transmittable hepatitis.

Dental Evaluation

There are several diagnostic aids useful in evaluating the suitability of an implant site.

- Radiographs/Computerized Images---These images help analyze bone quality and quantity, measure the site, and determine the proximity of anatomic structures.
- Mounted Study Casts---We use casts to study bone morphology and bone availability. We also use them to construct surgical templates.
- Surgical Radiographic Templates---Templates help determine the minimum amount of bone needed.

Once an implant candidate is identified, patient education and documentation are essential. We educate the candidate about the treatment process, treatment time required, oral hygiene, possible complications, and risks for failure. Models, photographs, and radiographs help the patient visualize and understand the more complicated concepts.

For several reasons, we require detailed records, including a consent form, throughout the entire

process. Detailed records enable clear communication of the information on which the patient bases his or her decision. Verbal explanations that cannot be documented are avoided. Written documentation also shows that the patient was provided with all relevant information, gave permission for treatment, and provides us with legal documentation.