Dental clinicians often play instrumental roles in restoring the integrity of a patient’s face; they also are in a unique position to help their patients appreciate the internal beauty as well. This is what I plan to address during my keynote presentation, titled “Beauty Reconsidered,” at the Academy of Osseointegration’s 2017 Annual Meeting.

Neuroscientists tell us that our brains are hard-wired to recognize and respond to beauty. There is a region of the brain where neurons specifically fire when we gaze upon a face. Within months of birth, infants use this brain region to recognize and discriminate among faces and the emotions portrayed by these faces. So, when something disrupts our facial appearance — whether it is caused by disease, deformity or trauma — it can have a profound impact on how others see us and how we see ourselves. Facial changes affect our sense of well-being. That’s why it is critical for dental clinicians to treat the whole person. You aren’t just restoring a part of the patient’s anatomy; you are restoring their sense of completeness. There may be surgical limitations to the repair, but as you approach a patient’s restorative plan, I urge you to consider how you can assist them in redefining what is beautiful.

Join me at AO’s meeting, taking place March 15-18 in Orlando, Fla. Let’s do this together: Let’s teach ourselves and our patients that beauty is not determined by a surgical outcome alone. Beauty is defined by authenticity, compassion and perseverance in the face of adversity.