Dear readers,

A teacher of mine and a talented chief physician of general surgery taught me that “the best is the enemy of the good”. I am referring to when we were young and ambitious surgeons looking to achieve perfect final closure of the wound. Insisting on placing the last stitch, though not essential, resulted in damaging a blood vessel, forcing us to reopen the patient.

A nice article I read recently (“Teeth within an hour” by Dr Göran Urde, Implant Tribune, Middle East & Africa Edition, November/December 2017) leads me to paraphrase the aphorism of my teacher as I do in the title and to reconfirm what I have repeated constantly all over the world. I see more and more that we are witness to an increasing and often unmotivated tendency to have everything and to want it immediately, even healing processes. As Dr Deepak Chopra, a physician and contemporary biologist, has said: “We are the only creatures on earth who can change our biology by what we think and feel.”

Therefore, in an era in which the Internet and smartphones render waiting obsolete and Dr Google has the solution to all our problems, our patients expect biology to follow this trend, adapting the length of healing to their changed expectations. In this new scenario, patients have the same expectations when it comes to dental treatment—and this applies to every type of treatment, from implantology to orthodontics. Knowing that new procedures and offerings are continually being developed, patients are asking for solutions that meet their expectations more than their biological needs—and of course with no discomfort or problems.

In this crazy race among specialists to see who is quicker to place implants or align teeth, that will soon lead us (unfortunately an obvious prophecy that has many adherents) to a dramatic fallout in terms of failures, insurance problems and renewed distrust of our already mistreated specialty, for which many are responsible.

Companies, in doing their work, try to convince us to adopt new techniques and new protocols less and less validated by time and numbers. Unknown companies offer cheaper and innovative systems not supported by studies and research, and dentists (together with their patients) will act as human guinea pigs.

As professionals, we are too often prone to external pressures: instead of safeguarding the independence of our decision-making processes, to avoid the risk of losing the case to be treated, we can be tempted not to do what science and our conscience would suggest is needed, and rather let ourselves be influenced by what the external world imposes on us, often personally facing the consequences for it.

I would like to conclude by quoting George Bernard Shaw: “Science is always wrong. It never solves a problem without creating ten more.” Let us go back to treating cases only after serious and careful evaluation and using validated protocols that we have mastered. Gaining a few months to later lose teeth moved wrongly or too quickly is not always the best ethical choice.

Yours faithfully,

Prof. Mauro Labanca