Imagine a technology that brings the most detailed knowledge of the patient’s dental anatomy and greater treatment predictability right into the dental office. A good imagination is no longer necessary to achieve that goal. That technology, CBCT imaging, is not just a dental daydream but also a reality every day in many dental offices nationally and internationally.

Before and after investing in CBCT, many professionals take advantage of educational opportunities to grow their knowledge of this imaging method. On June 25 and 26, in La Jolla, Calif., Imaging Sciences International and Gendex Dental Systems will be hosting the fourth International Congress on 3-D Dental Imaging. There, dental professionals will hear about 3-D’s past, its present uses and successes, and future implications. The two-day symposium offers insights into field-of-view options for various specialties, detailed clinical application and hands-on training with 3-D planning software programs, and discussions of legal issues.

Three-dimensional technology is already redefining dental outcomes across a broad spectrum of treatment options, including implants, bone grafting, oral surgery, orthodontics and endodontics. The ability to capture a 3-D image of the mouth and to view it from all angles, together with the capability of rotating that 3-D mode and zooming in on details, can only result in more effective dental treatment.

With cone beam, all of the information can be coordinated for integration with other applications, such as guided implant placement software or CAD/CAM. The recent integration of E4D and i-CAT/GXCB-500 allows clinicians to combine high-resolution three-dimensional cone-beam scan data and digital impression scan data so that they can simultaneously plan implants and restorations together in one cohesive system (Fig. 1).

Software navigates the clinician through this process and ultimately reduces the risk of poorly placed implants. For immediate-load implant cases, pairing these two technologies offers chairside milling of surgical guides so that the patient can be completely treated from implant placement to the seating of the restoration in one visit.

Dentists who have already implemented 3-D technology are seeing results, from more proficient diagnosis to more defined treatment planning and increased case acceptance. Speakers at the conference, such as i-CAT-owner Dr. Steven Guttenberg and GXCB-500 HD-owner Dr. John Flucke, will share their experiences on how CBCT is helping to change the face of dentistry across a wide range of procedures.

How is dental imaging broadening the scope of dental procedures for the general dentist as well as specialties?

Dr. Steven Guttenberg: With 3-D imaging, the dental profession is experiencing a real paradigm shift. Dental radiography has come a long way from the first X-ray taken by Wilhelm Roentgen of his wife’s hand in December of 1895. However, even with a panoramic radiograph, we are getting a 2-D representation and making diagnostic and treatment decisions for a three-dimensional object.

CBCT imaging gives dentists the opportunity to diagnose and plan treatment more efficiently. While I thought that I would use my i-CAT...
Industry Interview

Dr. John Flucke: That is exactly the reason I entitled my seminar, “Scrabble and Alphabet Soup — Bringing Simplicity to Cone-Beam Technology”. There is a lot of hesitation on the part of some general dentists that cone beam is just for the realm of the specialist or the dental school. When faced with acronyms such as CBCT, cone-beam computed tomography, or terms such as voxel, the three-dimensional equivalent of a pixel, they get intimidated by the mishmash of initials and unfamiliar words. They just want an X-ray.

After becoming educated about 3-D imaging, they realize that it is not as intimidating as they first expected. I am not an electrical engineer or radiologist; I am just a dentist who uses 3-D cone beam to improve patient care, and that is why it is important to hear about this technology from people like me.

What do you tell general practitioners who may feel intimidated by this technology?

Flucke: There are so many cases, but this case in particular was very satisfying. A new patient arrived at my practice eight months after seeing her previous dentist, who she had seen for the past 10 years. The patient had always been diligent, almost fanatical, about her dental health, but was two months overdue for a cleaning.

We took a CBCT scan and found an undetected cyst growing in the mandible almost to the point of causing a fracture of the mandible (Fig. 3). When we pointed this out, the patient responded, “Maybe that is why my lip goes numb sometimes, and I get these shooting pains in my jaw.”

While the patient wondered why, even throughout her regular visits to the dentist this condition went undiagnosed, I recognized that the previous dentist was not really at fault. The dentist had been taking 2-D films, but this case in particular was very informative. A new patient arrived at my practice eight months after seeing her previous dentist, who she had seen for the past 10 years. The patient had always been diligent, almost fanatical, about her dental health, but was two months overdue for a cleaning.

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When I think about the many ways that scans can be viewed and the scope of information that each scan provides (Fig. 2), the list of procedures that can benefit from this technology just keeps getting longer.

What type of dentist really needs 3-D imaging?

Guttenberg: Being at the congress last year was an eye-opening experience. I witnessed how doctors of different specialties and general dentists use this innovation. For any practice to expand and improve, a dentist must embrace change.

Archwire technology.

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Far more important than the Scrabble and alphabet soup, imaging is all about providing the best possible outcome for the patient.

Can you share a case from your own practice?

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What is your main message to dentists contemplating implementation of CBCT?
Flucke: I’m a general dentist. I use and believe in this technology. I have seen so many scans that have changed the course of treatment or provided the missing information for difficult diagnoses. By being a speaker at the conference, this is what I want people to know: Don’t be afraid to use 3-D imaging. Use it because it is the smart and the best thing to do. The end game is making the lives of our patients better and cone-beam 3-D imaging is the best way to do that.

Dr. Guttenberg offers a parting thought from George Bernard Shaw to encourage colleagues to educate themselves on 3-D technology to better understand its benefits to the dental practice.
“Progress is impossible without change, and those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything.”
For a full list of the topics and speakers that will be featured at the fourth International Congress on 3-D Dental Imaging and registration information, visit www.i-CAT3D.com.

About the interviewees

Dr. John Flucke practices in Lee’s Summit, Mo.; he is a well-recognized expert and educator in dental technology.

Dr. Steven Guttenberg is an oral and maxillofacial surgeon, practicing in Washington, D.C., where he is director of the Washington Institute for Mouth, Face and Jaw Surgery.

Attend the fourth International Congress on 3-D Dental Imaging online

Don’t miss the opportunity to learn from the industry’s leading experts on 3-D imaging, planning and treatment. Learn how to incorporate, afford and use the technology in your practice today.

On June 25 and 26, the fourth International Congress on 3-D Dental Imaging hosted by Imaging Sciences and Gendex Dental Systems will be broadcast live online to provide those who cannot make it to La Jolla, Calif., an opportunity to learn about the benefits of 3-D imaging technology. Please see program details at www.i-cat3d.com.

Online participants will receive ADA-CERP C.E. credits.

Registration for the two-day, live online broadcast is $149 and provides access to the archived recording for 30 days, to review at your convenience. Attendees require an online computer with audio capabilities. Please register at www.DTStudyClub.com under Online Courses. See you online!

Fight oral cancer!

Prove to your patients just how committed you are to fighting this disease by signing up to be listed at www.oralcancerselfexam.com. This website shows patients how to do self-examinations for oral cancer.

Self-examination can help your patients to detect abnormalities or incipient oral cancer lesions early. Early detection in the fight against cancer is crucial and a primary benefit in encouraging your patients to engage in self-examinations.

Secondly, as dental patients become more familiar with their oral cavity, it will stimulate them to receive treatment much faster.

If dental professionals do not take the lead in the fight against oral cancer, who will? And in the eyes of our patients, they likely would not expect anyone else to do so — would you?