Meeting on implants informs and inspires

By Michmershuizen, Managing Editor Endo Tribune

The future of implant dentistry is bright. That was the message delivered at the Long Island Dental Implant Symposium, held Sept. 17 at the Huntington Hilton in Melville, N.Y. The event featured presentations by three well-known speakers and was sponsored by Astra Tech and Town & Country Dental Studios. More than 50 dentists attended, according to organizers of the event.

Dr. Roger P. Levin, whose consulting business, the Levin Group, is dedicated to helping dentists increase production and profitability while having fun at the same time, led off the day with a simple message. For fun at the same time, he said. The public needs us, and the public wants us. And yes, people are still spending money on elective dentistry. Dentists who are smart — who want to improve their own practices and their own lives — will embrace implant dentistry, which is undoubtedly going to be a big part of their future.

Levin’s advice, for those dentists who focus mostly on basic or comprehensive dentistry, is to implement an annual plan dedicated to increasing the percentage of time devoted to cosmetic and implant dentistry.

“In my grandfather’s day, the basics were enough,” Levin said. “If you are not doing implants today, it is time to get started. Elective dentistry should be seen as a business within your business.”

The key, Levin said, is to understand today’s new breed of patient. People now are increasingly affluent. Most are educating themselves on treatment options by visiting Internet sites before even walking into a practice. They feel pressure to look good, and more than anything they want convenience. “Whoever makes it easiest wins,” he said.

At the same time, Levin said, it is important to provide patients with various payment options, such as 5 percent off for cash up front, half up front and half by the end of the appointment, or financing via credit. “Have a finance person whose job it is to get an option accepted,” he said. “The fact is that it always comes down to money.”

It’s also vital, Levin said, to educate each and every patient about the benefits of implants, so that if they ever lose a tooth they will think of you. “Everyone in your practice should be familiar with the benefits of implant dentistry,” he said. “Your office should ‘scream’ implants — your staff should be implant evangelists.”

Levin said that when talking to patients about implants, it is important to “speak English, not dental.” After all, he said, people just want to know five things: What is it? What will it do for me? How long will it take? How much does it hurt? How much will it cost? It is useful to use scripting, he said, to shift the conversation about elective dentistry from money to benefits. “Stop talking technical, talk benefits,” he said.

The good news, Levin said, is that advances like the Atlantis abutment, manufactured by Astra Tech and made available through Town & Country Dental Labs, plus diagnostic tools like cone beam scanning, available from companies like i-donecis, make working with implants faster, easier and more profitable than ever before.

Dr. Julian Osoiro, inventor of the Atlantis abutment, offered a presentation on the thinking behind the patient-specific, CAD/CAM technology that has dramatically simplified and improved the implant restorative process. Osoiro explained how Atlantis abutments eliminate the need for final impressions and cut chair time in half. The final result, he said, is improved clinical outcomes for patients.

Dr. Alan A. Winter, co-founder, president and CEO of i-donecis, a company that provides digital cone beam scanning, explained why 3-D imaging is such an indispensable tool for the pre-surgical planning of dental implants.

Also participating in the daylong symposium was Cadent, a digital impression company whose iTero system is designed to make restorations more predictable and better fitting.