Help invent the future of informatics in dental care and research

By Titus Schleyer, DMD, PhD

Dentistry is going digital. Computer-based patient records, digital impressions, 3-D models, CAD/CAM, personal dental records, online scheduling and teledentistry are some of the technologies that only recently have seen the light of day. But have you ever wondered how these innovations are created? Where are the people who have these ideas and make them real? How are they trained?

You’d be surprised to hear that innovators are found nearly everywhere in dentistry — in the corporate R&D departments of industry, public and private research institutes, universities and dental practices. Engineers, computer scientists, cognitive and quantitative psychologists, information technology specialists and computer-savvy dentists all contribute to the technological revolution of dentistry. Should you be one of them?

Some of us are quite happy observing the steady stream of new technologies, and picking and choosing what appears useful and usable to us. Others take a more conservative approach and adopt few or none of the newfangled gadgets and technologies. Still others are not happy with just watching the revolution occur — they want to shape it.

It is for these individuals this column is written. We want you! Through our training program in dental informatics (see di.dental.pitt.edu/postgrad.php), we educate tomorrow’s leaders of the technological revolution in dental care and research. The program is targeted at people with bright ideas who want to change the practice of dentistry.

Gaining the expertise and knowledge to help lead the technological revolution in dentistry requires some work. Our program offers a master’s or PhD degree in biomedical informatics with a concentration in dental informatics; a postgraduate program is available (see Table, Page 6). Degree programs are composed of a rigorous didactic component and in-depth research training, beginning in the first semester. Trainees are expected to fully immerse themselves into the science of biomedical informatics, and to present and publish their work frequently.

The University of Pittsburgh Bio-medical Informatics Training Program provides a unique setting — medicine, dentistry, nursing, psychology, computer science, informatics, and environment for future dental informatics researchers. More than 25 core faculty interact with and teach the approximately 35 trainees enrolled at any one time. Trainees are expected to fully immerse themselves into the science of biomedical informatics, and to present and publish their work frequently.

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The critical missing element to complete care: where dentistry and orofacial myofunctional therapy meet (Part 2 of 2)

By Joy L. Moeller, RDH, BS, COM

Types of therapy programs offered
I have been practicing orofacial myofunctional therapy for 30 years and have treated thousands of patients. My son had this problem when he was 7 years old and I witnessed the positive change in his quality of my patients’ lives. I have five different programs I offer to my patients:

- Habit Elimination Therapy
- Mini-Myo Program for the young