Man With a Mission

Instead of the usual big party, Dr Edwin Scher is celebrating 20 years of teaching dental implant programmes with a seminar, as well as planning lectures for the Clinical Innovations conference. Yvonne Gordon finds out why

Implantology pioneer, Dr Edwin Scher is celebrating 20 years of teaching Dental Implant Programmes this year in a novel way. Instead of marking the occasion with a big party at an upmarket venue as in previous years, he has made the decision to hold a full-day seminar on, ‘How to Make Dental Practices Recession-Resistant,’ which he feels is more appropriate in the current economic climate.

Specialist in Oral Surgery & Prosthodontics, Dr Scher is a man, whose dental prowess is in great demand across the globe. I was lucky enough to find a window of opportunity to meet him in his busy schedule. The previous evening, he told me that 15 dentists had gathered at his home to discuss journals. The night before he had a committee meeting and he was working the whole of the following day and then jetting off to Cape Town, to lecture at a conference. This pace is normal for Dr Scher, who is fulfilling his life-long dream through his work. He says: ‘I always dreamed of being this busy and in demand as a dental specialist in my chosen field and it is thrilling that it is actually happening. In fact I can’t quite believe it, but it is fantastic.

‘Every month I am invited to lecture abroad about Implantology, to countries including the U.S., Norway, Israel, South Africa and Germany and am very honoured to be so busy.’

A pioneer in Implantology, Dr Scher is one of a rare breed of dentists who has a lot of teaching experience as well as being a specialist in both Oral Surgery and Prosthodontics.

He has run his renowned practice off King’s Road for 20 years. But Dr Scher is not celebrating this achievement by holding a party at The Roof Garden, or, Madam Tussauds as he did for marking 10 and 15 years of teaching. He explains why he is instead organising a seminar on making practices recession-resistant. He says: ‘My wife, Belinda and I feel this is far more appropriate in the terrible economic climate, than having a flash party. That is why we have invited renowned practice-manager guru, Cathy Jamieson, over from the States to run this seminar, to which we will invite all our refer-

Professor Nitzan Bichacho and Dr Devorah Schwartz-Arad are talking on ‘Success Factors in Dental Implantation: A multi-disciplinary approach between the surgeon and the prosthodontist.’ Dr Scher says: ‘I have invited top academics over from Israel for the event, whom the NUT attempted to prevent from speaking in the UK because of a boycott against Israel. So I wanted to redress the balance. In Israel, Implantology is at the forefront of complicated treatment planning.’

Prof Bichacho heads the Ronald E. Goldstein Centre for Aesthetic Dentistry and Clinical Research at the Prosthodontics department of Hadassah Medical Campus. He has published and lectured extensively worldwide in the fields of dental im-

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Dr Schwartz-Arad received her PhD from the faculty of medicine, at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem. She is a specialist in oral and maxillofacial surgery and has lectured for more than 20 years at, Tel Aviv University. She also has a surgery, with special expertise in bone grafting and dental implantology.

Dr Scher comes from a long line of dentists, with his grandfather, his father and three brothers all following the profession. Although the Schers are no longer residents of Cork, the family has left a lasting legacy there as confirmed by magazine article, Tribute to the Schers - Dentists Supreme.

He says: ‘As a student, I would stand at the bottom of my father’s chair, who was Dean and Professor of Prosthodontics at Cork Dental Hospital. He used to say, ‘if only there were two roots in the lower jaw, it would give the denture stability’. When implants came along, I always remembered my father’s saying. When he passed away, I had been doing implants for four years and he was very proud.’

Originally trained at the dental school of University College London in 1975, Dr Scher has many prestigious titles to his name. He is full visiting professor of Prosthodontics & Implants at Temple University, Philadelphia, a member of the faculty of dentistry at Lyon and honorary senior lecturer at Salford University, as well as an honorary lecturer at Eastman Dental School. He is also on the board of the world’s biggest implant board, ICOI, (International Congress of Oral Implantology)

Editorially, he is chairman of the board on quarterly publication, Implant Dentistry Today and has been featured in many magazines and newspapers, including Harper’s, The Daily Mail, Good Health, section and, Dental Practice magazine. He is also a highly respected contributor of refereed articles to many journals in the field.

Dr Scher has headed on-site dental education teaching programmes for 20 years, running annually, two six-day programmes, three Advanced Surgery two-day programmes, as well as two two-day Guided Surgery lectures. He is also very interested in distance learning and wrote a module about, Implant Complications, within the, Implants Distance Learning Programme, for the Association of Dental Implantology. (ADI) In the elegant town-house where the practice is housed, closed-circuit television connects the 12-seater lecture theatre upstairs, with the operating theatre.

He loves his work and says: ‘Implants can really change a person’s life. Patients always want to tell others how good it is. I have restored patients who have several front teeth missing to full dental health. They are ecstatic.

‘There has been a massive growth in implants. But in the UK we are very late in implant awareness. We are way behind. The public at large don’t yet know the full extent of what implants can do. I love teaching because it brings greater awareness of what is possible, but I would always want to carry on doing the practical work.

‘It is very important that all GDPs should have enough knowledge to use implants in their patient treatment plans when appropriate. This does not however mean that dental practitioners have to carry it out themselves, but they must know when to refer a patient on.’

However he warned that any periodontal disease must be cleared before implant surgery and, if severe, needs to be referred to a periodontologist, before implant treatment can take place.

He says: ‘A good ethical dentist is going to ensure any gum disease is under control. They will always make sure they see the whole picture.’

He says the main candidates for implants are usually middle-aged and elderly, except for younger people who have lost teeth through accidents. He explains: ‘Those aged from 15-50 are fluoride babies and tend to have fewer tooth problems, along with better oral hygiene.’

Surgical nurse turned practice manager, Diane Barnes, is friendly and efficient. She has worked with Dr Scher for 25 years and presides over the team of three nurses, two hygienists and two dentists. She says: ‘We are very busy with lots of regulars and referrals, because of our good reputation.’

Dr Scher’s next Osseointegrated Implant course runs from March 15 to 20 at Walpole Street. Its aim is to follow patients through from examination, treatment, planning and operation to the final restoration.

The practice also offers treatment including preventative dentistry, periodontics, hygienist treatment, cosmetic dentistry as well as its groundbreaking work in Implantology, for which it is renowned.

For more information on Walpole’s Clinical Innovations conference, call Smile-on on 020 7400 8989 or log onto: www.clinicalinnovations.co.uk

For more information on Walpole Dental Practice contact: 020 7807 9855. Or visit www.dental-implants.co.uk