Those who see the ‘big picture’ gather for two days of 3-D education

By Fred Michmershuijten, Online Editor

Are you using 3-D imaging yet? Or are you stuck in the 2-D X-ray world? If you haven’t yet ventured into the new visual frontier of cone-beam imaging, you have no idea what you might be missing. Just ask those who attended the third International Congress on 3-D Dental Imaging, held in Chicago from June 19 and 20. The event was hosted by Imaging Sciences International and Gendex Dental Systems.

Practitioners in a variety of fields gathered for two full days of intensive education and panel discussions. The theme of the meeting was “An Interdisciplinary Approach to Treatment Planning,” and an impressive roster of speakers shared their knowledge and expertise in how they incorporate 3-D technology in general dentistry, implantology, orthodontics and endodontics.

In addition, almost two dozen companies were on hand to showcase their offerings, including new products, software and ancillary services.

“Cone-beam 3-D technology has emerged as the superior treatment planning tool throughout the industry,” said Rob Joyce, president of KaVo Group Imaging, in remarks welcoming attendees to the congress. “As practices around the globe transition from 2-D to 3-D imaging, we realized the need to provide dental professionals with the information and expertise to successfully bring 3-D dentistry into the everyday practice.”

Dr. Scott Ganz, who served as moderator for the event, kicked off the meeting with welcoming remarks and an introduction. His advice to attendees: If you have cone-beam in your practice, scan every patient regardless of what kind of treatment they need. “Technology is our friend,” he said. “Embrace technology.”

Ganz was joined by Dr. Jack Krauser for the first session, “Lessons Learned: Incorporating Cone-Beam CT and 3-D Implant Planning: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly.” They presented cases that had been treated beautifully with 3-D imaging, and many others that did not turn out so well when using traditional 2-D images.

Krauser, who said his cone-beam machine is the single most important device he’s ever gotten for his practice, pointed out that while the data collected for a patient can be useful for things such as guided surgery, it is ultimately the dentist—not the software—who must interpret the data to determine the best plan of action.

“Installing the cone-beam machine is just the beginning,” Krauser said. “It’s not the scan, it’s the plan.”

Krauser said the technology can be used by dentists to look back at past cases that failed to find out what went wrong and why. Such insights are valuable, he said, in preventing future mistakes.

Later in the day, orthodontist Dr. Ed Lin presented “Taking 21st Century Orthodontics into the 3-D World.” He said while the software can be difficult to learn, the improved results for patients makes the investment of both time and money worth it.

“With these tools we don’t have to guess anymore,” Lin said. “It is our responsibility to learn this.” Also presenting on the first day of the congress were Dr. James Mah on “Lies, Damned Lies and Cone Beam;” Dr. Michael A. Pikos on “Interdisciplinary Esthetic Zone Reconstruction: Synergy of Interactive CT/Hard and Soft Tissue Grafting;” and Dr. Walter Whitwood on “Creating Better Communications with Technology.”

Dr. W. Bruce Howerton Jr., who offered “A Systematic Approach to Interpreting DICOM Data Within the Field of View,” was among the presenters on the second day. Howerton took attendees on a “tour” of the human facial anatomy, from top to bottom and left to right. He showed fellow dentists what to look for in data sets. He even revealed how to detect things such as sinus infections and excessive ear wax buildup in patients, which is quite common.

Later in the day, Art Carley, an attorney, offered up some of the legal ramifications involved in using—or not using—3-D imaging. Also presenting on the second day of the congress were Dr. Ralan Wong on “5-De Endodontics: The Final Frontier;” and Dr. Steven A. Guttenberg on “Cone Beam CT: Can You Afford to Not Have One in Your Office?”

The meeting was made possible by Imaging Sciences International and Gendex Dental Systems, the corporate hosts for the event. Also supporting the meeting was gold sponsor 3D Diagnostix.

Sponsoring companies were 360imaging, 3dMD, Anatomage, BeamRiders Diagnostic Services, BioHorizons, Carestream Dental, DIMS, Dolphin Imaging & Management Solutions, Dimensions Imaging, KaVo Dental, Materialase Dental, Nobel Biocare, nSequence, Ormco, Pelton & Crane, RLMS Radiology Lab Management System, SureSmile Digital Orthodontic System, Sybron Implant Solutions and The Bottom Line Comprehensive Course.

During breaks between presentations, meeting attendees were able to visit all of the sponsoring companies in the exhibit area.

Plans are already under way for the fourth International Congress on 3-D Dental Imaging, to be held June 25–26, 2010, in La Jolla, Calif. For more information and to register, visit www.i-CAT3D.com.