



# In Practice

WITH DR. RONALD E. GOLDSTEIN

## Keeping Current



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I am behind on everything. It seems my life has been going from one deadline to another. No one but a fellow teacher could possibly realize just how much time it takes to prepare even an hour of lecture time. And, most of the courses we give are 6 hours in duration. PowerPoint seems to take even longer to prepare. It is great for teaching, but each image takes a huge amount of time. My publisher can tell you that my next textbook, *Esthetics in Dentistry, Volume III*, is very behind schedule. It always seems to take 10 times longer than I think it should to complete a single chapter. And when it is done, I'm rarely happy so I have to start over again and try to improve it...and this goes on and on.

I'm not as bad as my partner, Dave Garber, who rewrites everything, which is why you haven't read his wonderful textbook on implant dentistry. David actually finished it 10 years ago and has been rewriting it ever since. Hopefully, he will have it to the publisher by the end of this year. [QA: Edit OK?]

So why does it take so long to accomplish any one project? Well, part of the problem is staying ahead on a daily basis. There is an enormous amount of reading that each of us in dentistry has to do to stay current with everything [QA: Edit OK?]. In the "old days," if one read the *Journal of the American Dental Association* (JADA), he or she was up to par. We still read JADA and the *American Dental Association* (ADA) *News*, plus approximately 20 other newsletters, journals, and dental magazines, and still we struggle to stay caught up. Just when I think I am getting control of the situation, another dental journal makes its way to my desk, which I find impossible to discard without spending time perusing its contents and usually reading one or more articles.

If that weren't enough, there is the new onslaught of videos and CD-ROMS, which keep appearing in our mail from various manufacturers and others who want to gain our attention with fancy graphics and an exhaustive amount of literature to support a particular product. So much of this is presented in a high-tech format, but added to the already great amount of dental literature, it becomes almost overwhelming. No wonder so many dentists feel so insecure about their knowledge base. I am referring to dentists who really want an 8 AM to 4 PM professional life with after-hour availability to his or her family

rather than devoting so many hours to the necessary quest of "keeping current."

### BEYOND DENTAL JOURNALS

It doesn't stop at dental journals. If I want to have intelligent conversations with my patients, I feel I simply must read the kinds of things he or she reads. This means never going to sleep at night without reading the newspaper cover to cover. I cannot miss the obituaries because I don't want to be embarrassed again by calling a patient and being told, "He died 3 months ago." Ever since then, the first thing I read is the obituary page. When I go out of town, I have them saved, and I read the obituary sections when I return. Sunday in my house means a half day of reading—not only the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* (which is a big newspaper, which I use for my weightlifting workout while walking back from the mailbox)—but also the *Sunday New York Times*, which I think gives me another perspective on the same news. [QA: Edit OK?]

If this wasn't enough, I feel I must at least go through the approximately 100 magazines we receive in the office every month. From this

I gain great insight into not only what men are thinking, but what women are thinking as well. I keep abreast of the fashions, what the opinion leaders are saying or not saying, and manage to find a huge amount of trivia (which helps make me popular at cocktail parties). I learn about buildings through *Architectural Digest*, the types of homes that Atlanta has to offer, and sometimes who their inhabitants are.

The business and economic scene that I try to monitor (it still amazes me that I lost so much in the stock market) doesn't stop at reading publications. I never miss the 11 PM news because that's even more current than the daily newspaper.

Of course, one must put in the expected time on the Internet. There are innumerable dental sites with both well-known and new information. Unfortunately, when I go to my Internet start page, there are always at least five or six catchy headlines that I "must" click.

Some emails are enlightening, although I could do without the 30 or 40 junk emails I get per day. A great deal of my email comes from dental sources, not only manufacturers, but associated dental groups and companies, including the ADA.

There is a high cost of keeping current. The cost is not one of dollars, but of time. So much time is spent in our quest to not only stay up with, but also try to get ahead of the circle of news, current events, scientific information, trivia, and just plain nonsense.

### BRAIN OVERLOAD

Somewhere along the line there has to be a certain level at which we cannot, or perhaps should not, accumulate more information to



stuff in our brains. I don't think I've reached that point yet. But what I do find is that the stacks of magazines get higher and higher each month. That's because of the great amount of articles that I designate I would like to read in more detail, rather than just the summaries. The abstracts somehow stick in our minds, but with the comforting

feeling that we can always go back if we need to for the entire article.

#### **THE BOTTOM LINE**

I believe the answer is more "bottom line" productions. For those of you who have never read the publication, *Bottom Line*, I encourage you to do so. It has a broad assortment of interesting

information and is presented in an abbreviated newsy style. I believe that is the way our publications will eventually evolve. There is so much information out there that we will require it to be condensed. Eventually it will come via the Internet or in print in the style of CNN Headline News—concise, to the point, and easy to understand. Until that

#### **MY TOP 10 DENTAL PUBLICATIONS**

- *Journal of American Dental Association*
- *American Dental Association News*
- *Contemporary Esthetics and Restorative Practice*
- *Journal of Esthetic Dentistry*
- *Practical Periodontics and Aesthetic Dentistry*
- *Quintessence International*
- *Dentistry Today*
- *Dental Products Report*
- *Journal of Prosthetic Dentistry*
- *Dental Abstracts*

#### **MY TOP 10 NONDENTAL PUBLICATIONS**

- *People*
- *Vogue or W*
- *Vanity Fair or In-Style*
- *Town and Country*
- *Esquire or GQ*
- *PC Magazine*
- *Time or Newsweek*
- *Travel & Leisure or Condé Nast Traveler*
- *Gourmet or Bon Appétit*
- *Worth or Money*

happens, we will all just have to struggle through the plethora of dental and nondental literature in our attempts to keep current.

I am constantly amazed at one of my colleagues, a well-known teacher and dentist, who does not use email, rarely looks at the Internet, does not read the newspaper, and seldom turns on the television. I wonder how he stays so current, without previewing all of this information that I feel necessary to embrace. If by now you have not figured out just how compulsive I am, you will know there is a dramatic difference between us, and yet we both survive. Somehow I feel guilty if I let one of these methods of mass-media learning slip by my eyes without seeing it, but in the final analysis, I wonder what difference it will make. Besides, if I could just learn to live without so much of the nonsense, I would probably be ahead enough to finish another textbook. ○

