



# Oral Medicine on the Forefront – Highlights from the 7th Biennial Congress of the European Association of Oral Medicine

The 7th Biennial Congress of the European Association of Oral Medicine was held in Berlin, September 23-25, 2005 together with the German Academy of Oral Pathology and Oral Medicine (AKOPOM). The main theme of the congress was: "Mouth and Medicine – Scientific Approaches" with a focus on the immunocompromised patient and the special care patient.

One of the Congress highlights was that patients with local oral mucosal diseases or systemic ones such as diabetes mellitus, oral cancer and postoperative radiation therapy could be candidates for oral implants. Recently there have been some reports on the use of implants in patients with e.g. oral lichen planus and bullous diseases such as variants of oral pemphigoid. It may even be possible to provide oral implants for patients with HIV infection under highly active antiretroviral therapy as restoration of the immune system seems to reduce the chances of failure of an implant. It was stressed, however, that until now only single case reports have been published and that there are no evidence-based studies available as yet.

The Congress covered a wide spectrum of diseases, lesions and conditions related to oral medicine. In particular key issues like xerostomia, oral lichen planus, opportunistic infections including human papilloma virus infection, oral bullous diseases, recurrent aphthous ulceration and most importantly, oral potentially malignant lesions such as oral leukoplakia, proliferative verrucous leukoplakia and oral lichen planus were addressed.

Additionally, lectures on oral squamous cell carcinoma focused on analysis of tissue gene expression profiles, apoptosis gene arrays and other up to date molecular biological methods. Interestingly, a variety of different approaches for treatment of recurrent aphthous stomatitis are being piloted including 1.3.-1.6. beta-glucan, matrix metallo-proteinase inhibitors hyaluronic acid. Although these therapeutic approaches vary greatly in their basic intervention principles they appear to be promising in their ability to reduce the length of time that ulcers persist.

Regarding the organ transplant patient, the importance of dental treatment prior to stem cell transplantation and other organ transplantation procedures like heart and liver transplantation have been demonstrated suggesting that dental treatment before organ transplantation does not have to be radical, and that the risk of organ transplant rejection due to dental foci and infection is minimal.

Although dentistry is often perceived as a restorative discipline with little interest in oral biology this is clearly not the case for oral medicine, which is a research based and driven discipline. In oral medicine we recognize that not only dental hard structures and the restoration of teeth are the main objectives of oral health sciences, but that the entire oral cavity and its soft tissue structures are in focus also. It was therefore a pleasure to note the increased attendance at the 7th Biennial Congress of the European Association of Oral Medicine. This points towards an increase of interest in this field of oral health and disease – in particular amongst young researchers.

The **Journal of Oral Biosciences & Medicine** also covers basic disciplines like oral physiology and patho-physiology, oral microbiology, oral biology, oral genetics as well as oral molecular biology fields,

*which have developed substantially during the last years. It is of utmost importance for those who work within dentistry to realise the importance of increased research in these areas. Such efforts are also essential if future oral medicine is to be improved. Otherwise, politicians will consider dentistry as a non-academic discipline, which can easily and much more cheaply be taught at a technical college. The avoidance of this disastrous development must be the main focus of all those working in oral medicine and associated fields of oral health sciences.*

*The 7th Biennial Congress of the European Association of Oral Medicine successfully highlighted the need to promote and encourage further high quality research within this discipline in all parts of the world.*

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