



Achievements and advances of a recent specialty

Logros y avances de una especialidad reciente

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Maxillofacial Prostheses is a recently approved Specialty at the National School of Dentistry, National University of Mexico (UNAM). On April 30th 1997, its creation was approved by the Academic Council of Biological, Chemical and Health Sciences Area {Consejo Académico del Área de las Ciencias Biológicas, Químicas y de la Salud (CAABQYS)}. Its creation arose from the need to provide rehabilitating treatment to patients afflicted with large sized defects within the oral cavity, the aforementioned defects being the product of genetic malformations, surgically acquired defects as well as oncological mutilations or trauma.

Defects to be treated are normally quite large, and involve different facial and cranial anatomical structures. With proper knowledge and handling of dental materials, and based on research protocols it is possible to meet the aims of rehabilitation and proper functioning of the patient, providing thus a better quality of life.

Different techniques have been developed to satisfy patient's needs. Among these can be counted the following: intra-oral, nasal, facial orbitary auricular and cranial prostheses, as well as combinations of any of the aforementioned. It is worth noting that all rehabilitation procedures are performed with materials destined to dental use. Among these the following can be included: metals, medical grade silicones, methyl methacrylate and bone integrated titanium implants. All these materials are considered of dental use.

The School of Dentistry of the National University of Mexico (UNAM) and its Graduate and Research School, through the Maxillofacial Prostheses Specialty, provide an out of campus program whereby patients of scarce means are treated in different Mexican States and municipalities, within the country as well as abroad. Patients attending these facilities would otherwise have no access to this type of rehabilitation. It is worth noting that during the four or five days of the program, approximately 90 patients receive free treatment. In these programs, ocular and ear prostheses are put into place. The Mexican States where these programs have been conducted once or twice a year are the following: Campeche, Tabasco, Chiapas, Oaxaca, Estado de México, Sinaloa, Nuevo León, and Baja California Norte.

This program has the advantage of training students in a parallel fashion along with other programs, such as Cleft Lip and Palate Surgery, so as to give comprehensive treatment to the population. These activities are part of the specialty and can be carried out in a short time. It is worth noting that before these programs, the manufacturing of an ocular prosthesis took three weeks. Nowadays, with the aid of the UNAM technique for the manufacturing of ocular prostheses, developed within our specialty, this procedure takes three hours, and consequently a greater number of patients can be treated. In Mexico, the percentage of children

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subject to a retinoblastoma procedure and mutilated by the surgery is very high. In these cases craniofacial growth and development must be compensated with an ocular prosthesis, to allow for the harmonious development of the patient until he reaches adulthood.

This specialty has the aim of meeting the requirements of one of the UNAM purposes, that is, to reciprocate and cover the requirements of the population, since these rehabilitations are necessary and required, as well as very costly. Therefore the endeavor for the specialty is to cover those rehabilitation requirements, reducing costs, as well as time used in surgery and the time required for the manufacturing of the prostheses.

«All human beings have the divine right to look human.»

A. Paré