Functional & Cosmetic Excellence: Revitalization of a Proven Treatment Philosophy

By Straty Righellis, DDS, Oakland, CA & L. Douglas Knight, DMD, Louisville, KY

Functional and Cosmetic Excellence (FACE Tx™) is an approach to orthodontics treatment that establishes measurable treatment goals for six elements that form the basis of comprehensive, interdisciplinary, high-quality orthodontic care:

• Functional occlusion
• TMJ health
• Facial balance
• Optimal dento-gingival esthetics (smile design)
• Periodontal health
• Stability

For each of these goals, the originators of the FACE Tx™ discipline have defined specific elements that create a framework for the systematic evaluation of the aesthetic and functional needs of each patient and a method to assess treatment results. These treatment goals are supported by reputable studies published in well-respected, peer-reviewed journals. Sharing these goals and the means to achieve them with an interdisciplinary team—the orthodontist, the dentist and/or other specialist(s) —provides you, the orthodontist, an opportunity to work with esteemed colleagues to create outstanding results for beauty, health and function.

Building successful practices is an important side benefit of this approach. Developing the skill sets required to manage and function within FACE Tx interdisciplinary treatment teams increases the complexity of cases one can treat. The collaborative interaction with experts in their respective fields (prosthodontists, periodontists, cosmetic and general dentists and surgeons), who ascribe to the same principles of tooth positioning and jaw function, creates a knowledge base to treat to predictable, on-time, optimal results while meeting and/or exceeding patients’ expectations. As a result, one’s referral network expands with resultant practice growth.

Worldwide Program of Instruction FACE Tx offers one of the world’s only postgraduate interdisciplinary continuing educational programs. Offered in numerous countries to university-trained orthodontists, it provides didactic instruction and hands-on experience. Through a series of 5 to 7 one-week sessions, a team of established educators and practitioners convey this unique curriculum. The associated FACE Tx fraternity incorporates a lifetime learning forum for thousands of doctors who have adapted FACE Tx principles to their practices.

The FACE Tx teaching staff builds on each participating clinician’s knowledge base. The full-time faculty—Drs. Jorge Ayala (Santiago, Chile), Renato Cocconi (Parma, Italy), L. Douglas Knight (Kentucky, USA), Domingo Martin (San Sebastian, Spain), Jeffrey McClendon (New York, USA), Straty Righellis (California, USA), and Carl Roy (Virginia, USA)—all manage active private practices and have extensive educational and clinical experience. The teaching faculty combines considerable years of skills and knowledge to formulate the FACE Tx approach to diagnosis, treatment planning and execution.

Defining Functional Occlusion, Smile Esthetics and Facial Balance

A number of orthodontic disciplines specify functional occlusion as a primary treatment goal, but few articulate criteria for its measurement or, for that matter, incorporate gnathological measurement protocols. Dr. Domingo Martin defines functional occlusion by what it is as well as what it is not. (See above.)

Figure 1a-d. The elements of a mutually protected occlusion: (a) optimal overjet and overbite in centric occlusion; (b) right working excursion; (c) right balancing excursion; (d) right protrusive excursion.

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While functional occlusion serves as the foundation for the FACE Tx approach, the discipline further differentiates itself by integrating facial balance with dento-gingival esthetics for a comprehensive approach to diagnosis, treatment planning and execution. Dr. Renato Cocconi and surgeon, Dr. Micro Rafalini, have analyzed the standards for optimal facial balance and dento-gingival esthetics and have quantified the relationship of the inclination of the upper incisors with the alar base and the pedestal of the nose. These elements are important diagnostic findings for the development of specific treatment goals and metrics to assess the esthetic quality of treatment results. Dr. Jorge Ayala has quantified the relationship that is clinically practical: it can be readily applied to one’s day-to-day practice.

What the FACE Tx Course Teaches

During the comprehensive one- to two-year FACE Tx program instruction, participants develop a solid foundation of knowledge and skills in the following areas that is clinically practical:

- In-depth evaluation of joint function and occlusion
- Mounting models with the most up-to-date instrumentation in simulating patients’ jaw movements
- Latest analytical techniques to assess facial balance and esthetic smile design
- Multidisciplinary case diagnosis and computer assisted treatment planning (VTO)
- Efficient and simple treatment mechanics with self-ligating appliances
- Establishing one’s own interdisciplinary treatment team
- Treatment and practice management strategies and marketing techniques to enhance one’s interdisciplinary network

While functional occlusion forms the pedestal of the nose, these approaches together with dento-gingival esthetics for a comprehensive approach to diagnosis, treatment planning and execution.

Conclusion

The FACE Tx philosophy incorporates comprehensive diagnosis and treatment planning, efficient treatment mechanics and the latest orthodontic advancements for treating each patient’s dental, facial and gnathological systems. Its aim is a collaboration between the goals of orthodontics and comprehensive dentistry that incorporates interdisciplinary coordination.

This approach expands the network of professionals who share principles of tooth positioning and jaw function. Such collaboration greatly strengthens one’s referral base as these colleagues understand the value of the orthodontic specialty and the specific value of FACE Tx. It promotes the viability of the orthodontic specialty through the development and maintenance of viable practices that combine function with beauty. The ultimate aim of FACE Tx is to foster excellence in orthodontic patient care and treatment through education, research and collaboration.

About the Authors

Dr. Righellis graduated from UCLA Dental School and received his orthodontic specialty certification from University of California, San Francisco. He maintains a private practice and serves as an associate clinical professor at the University of the Pacific and University of California, San Francisco. Dr. Righellis is a diplomate of the American Board of Orthodontics, is on the editorial review board for the American Journal of Orthodontics and lectures domestically and internationally on excellence in clinical orthodontics.

Dr. Knight received his dental degree from the University of Kentucky and was awarded a certificate in orthodontics and dento-facial orthopedics from New York University. Dr. Knight completed a comprehensive two-year clinical program in occlusion and orthodontics at the Ruth-Williams Center for Functional Occlusion. In private practice, Dr. Knight is a diplomate of the American Board of Orthodontics, a fellow of the Academy of General Dentistry, an active member of the American Association of Orthodontists, and lectures domestically and internationally on new orthodontic techniques and interdisciplinary dentistry.

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