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## Implants in an ageing population : changing concepts?

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Current demographic trends indicate an increasing segment of old people, in Japan and western countries. Implant supported overdentures, particularly in the mandible became a well–accepted treatment option for elderly edentulous patients. Promising short and long–term results, including immediate loading were reported. Oral comfort, mastication, wellbeing and quality of life were significantly improved and it became the best–documented treatment modality with implants. Some studies express the opinion that edentulousness and providing complete dentures will not disappear but both are just postponed to still older age. This may not be a real benefit if patients have to adapt to complete dentures in the last period of their life. Thus, mandibular implant overdentures will be a meaningful treatment option for an increasingly old population, also in the next future.

Due to better healthcare, more aged patients remain in fair health conditions and will maintain some natural teeth. Their wishes and needs for dental treatment will increase and treatment planning becomes more demanding with regard to systemic problems, function and quality of life. By means of implants, a variety of treatment options, complex reconstructions and simple solutions with reduced treatment goals, are available.

Geriatric dentists are often involved in specialized care for dependent, frail patients in nursing homes. Gerodontology sometimes disregards, that the majority of old patients is living in their private homes. Today it is suggested that at age 80 people should still have 20 teeth. Furthermore, we have to consider that currently, many patients who are now in their late fifties and sixties, receive complex implant prosthodontic rehabilitation. These patients will be soon our old, geriatric patients. Thus, within the next 20 years, the perspectives in gerodontology will significantly change and we have to be prepared for this. Implantology will and must become an object of geriatric dentistry, in teaching and practicing.