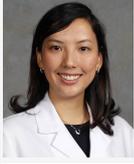


### Maxillofacial prosthodontics during a pandemic



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I am writing this as we have just started 2021. What a year 2020 has been! Social distancing restrictions, dental office closures, limited access to PPE still occurring in certain areas, and very strict and slow reopening rules for dental clinics worldwide as we now tackle the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> wave of the pandemic. Last year has brought many challenges to all of us. Maxillofacial prosthodontists in particular have been in a very unique position during this pandemic compared to some of our dental colleagues: with many of us being affiliated to hospitals meant that we were often deemed front line essential workers. We witnessed the struggles of our patients as many head and neck surgeries were being postponed or canceled due to the risk of contamination or due to lack of ventilators. We needed to contact colleagues to refer patients that were suddenly unable to cross borders to continue their ongoing care. We found new ways to teach dental students and prosthodontics residents remotely while becoming pioneers in adapting dental offices to the new reality of covid-19.

What we have learned during this last year, is that unfortunately nobody was prepared for a pandemic. It has shown us how fragile our entire system was, but also how resilient and adaptable we could be. Many prosthodontics organizations embraced social distancing and created faster communication pathways to their members to provide them with timely information on how to best navigate this change of events. They shared ideas on how to facilitate teledentistry, discussed how to install proper infection control measures, helped members navigate business interruptions, and compared international guidelines regarding various stages of reopening. Witnessing this sharing of material and cooperation between organizations that had not normally communicated with one another has been heartwarming.

This pandemic has had devastating impacts worldwide, but it has also shown us how we could adapt to new changes quickly and allowed us to learn many lessons along the way. We continued to perform research to improve the quality of life of our

patients as seen in the article: "*Evaluation of xerostomia and effect of maxillofacial prosthesis use on mouth dryness in head and neck tumor patients*", and developed new teaching methods for taking advantage of the capabilities of 3D scanning and rendering. These new techniques often translated into innovations in practice as we embraced this new digital world, as described in "*Three-dimensional printing immediate surgical obturator before maxillectomy: A pilot study*". Both articles are published in our 2021 issue of the International Journal of Maxillofacial Prosthetics. I am confident we will come out of this pandemic stronger as we re-engineer the future of maxillofacial prosthodontics so that our profession not only survives these challenges, but thrives from everything we have learned and accomplished.