From NiTi surface coatings to ultrasonic irrigation: LVI Dental Innovations Forum focuses on “The Future of Endodontics”

Pat Knapp, Managing Editor, Endo Tribune, U.S.A.

Las Vegas, Nevada—May 18–19, 2006—Topics ranging from surface engineering of nickel titanium rotary instruments to new computer-based educational tools were the focus of “The Future of Endodontics” forum held here on the campus of the Las Vegas Institute for Advanced Dental Studies (LVI).

More than 100 attendees gathered to hear from 15 of endodontics’ thought leaders as they explored the use of new materials and technology, the continuing education needs of specialists and general practitioners and current and emerging challenges in the field.

“It’s invigorating to come and hear from the gurus of endodontics,” says Elizabeth O’Sullivan-Winslow, DDS, who attended with two partners in The Medical Center Dental Group, Houston. O’Sullivan-Winslow was particularly impressed with a presentation by Unni Endres, DDS, a University of Oslo lecturer who introduced Visual Endodontics, a new CD-ROM-based educational/reference system that provides a comprehensive, integrated library of endodontic imagery. “This would be a great resource not only for endodontic or general dentistry students, but for any dental office, both as a reference tool and a way to educate patients,” notes O’Sullivan-Winslow.

Steven J. Katz, DDS, MS, whose endodontic practice is in Beachwood, Ohio, left the forum with information about how surface engineering may continue to improve the performance of NiTi rotary instruments. “Technology that will coat our files will make them stronger and less likely to break, and will be worth the money in peace of mind,” he says.

Forum attendees heard from innovators such as W. Ben Johnson, DDS, the inventor of the Thermofil root-filling technique, ProFile NiTi root canal instruments and the ProPaper® series of rotary files; and L. Stephen Buchanan, DDS, FICOI, FFCDS, an endodontics educator, author and designer of the GT™ system of rotary files. John M. Nusstein, DDS, MS, a researcher and assistant professor at The Ohio State University College of Dentistry, Advanced Endodontics section, summarized research on ultrasonic irrigation of root canal systems, which Johnson noted “is more than worth the investment, because it will appreciably raise the standard of care and treatment outcomes.”

The debate over who should perform root canals was a recurring theme at the forum. Kenneth Koch, DMD, cofounder of Real World Endo and founder and past director of the postdoctoral endodontics program at Harvard School of Dental Medicine, urged endodontists to educate their referral base about their specialty, and advised general practitioners to assess the level of difficulty at the same level as the specialist? “He outlined criteria for dentists to assess the level of difficulty of root canals and encouraged attendees to “become educated endodontic consumers” and use continuing education opportunities to their advantage.

William G. Dickerson, CEO and founder of the Las Vegas Institute Dental Group, Houston, urges endodontists to educate their referral base about their specialty, and advised general practitioners to assess the level of difficulty at the same level as the specialist. When first begun LVI in 1996, it was my goal to see it become the nation’s preeminent private institution for teaching dentists cosmetic and restorative dental techniques. It’s now my intent to advance our mission to be the preeminent international institution for the advancement and integration of the dental profession and the dental industry. Becoming a leader in endodontics is part of that mission.”

Last year LVI hired Arthur “Kit” Weathers Jr., DDS, as its full-time director of endodontics. Weathers has taught more than 3,000 dentists in his two-day, hands-on “Roots Camp.”