

Implantologists and Board Certification

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The American Board of Oral Implantology/Implant Dentistry offers an examination which purports to certify dentists as being competent in Implant Dentistry. Many dentists who have taken and passed this exam are competent dental implant practitioners, some are exceptional but most do not have the significant training to make them qualified in these areas of dentistry. It is the goal of this Board in conjunction with the AAID (American Academy of Implant Dentistry) to foster a pretend specialty in dental implantology by simulating the exams which a true dental specialist might go through. Without the proper training, however, these exams really mean nothing.

Dental implantology is not a specialty. Members of the AAID and or Dentists who have been certified by the ABOI/ID are not specialists in dental implantology (although they very well may be specialists in other recognized areas of dentistry). Since dental implantology is not a specialty, almost every type of dentist, specialist or general practitioner, works in this area and there are many outstanding specialists and general practitioners providing dental implant services.

If you go to a dentist who has this "credential" from the ABOI/ID and no other specialty degree, you cannot assume that he or she has significant training in dental implants. Check the reputations and results of these practitioners very careful and always choose one who has demonstrated consistent success with dental implant modalities in your community.

I downloaded the following page from a dental group. I find their analysis of "Implantology" offensive so I am taking this opportunity to respond to it.... My responses will be in dark red....

"THE IMPLANTOLOGIST"

THE QUALIFICATIONS AND THE CHOICE OF THE
BEST IMPLANTOLOGIST FOR YOU:

UNFORTUNATELY, NOT ALL THOSE WHO CALL THEMSELVES IMPLANTOLOGISTS
ACTUALLY HAVE THE QUALIFICATIONS WORTHY OF THAT TITLE. (I
certainly agree with that one...)

- AN IMPLANTOLOGIST MUST BE A DENTIST! (Well,
an Implantologist, must be a Dentist! But, a dentist does not have
to be an Implantologist to work with dental implants. As a matter
of fact, "Implantologist" is a made up name implying some sort of
specialty status in the use of dental implants. Implantology is NOT a specilaty!)

- QUALIFIED DENTISTS HAVE EITHER THE DDS (DOCTOR OF DENTAL SURGERY) OR DMD (DOCTOR OF MEDICAL DENTISTRY) DEGREE. (ok)

- AN IMPLANTOLOGIST MUST HAVE TRAINING IN IMPLANTOLOGY! (No such animal as an implantologist.... what they really mean is that the dentist who is either placing or restoring dental implants should have training in that discipline....)

- TAKING A COURSE IN IMPLANTOLOGY IS NOT ENOUGH TO QUALIFY A DENTIST AS AN IMPLANTOLOGIST. EXPERIENCE, EXPERIENCE AND MORE EXPERIENCE IS VERY NECESSARY. (Of

course experience is important. Why do you think they call it the "practice" of dentistry? Just remember, everyone starts from some place. I have seen trained individuals such as oral surgeons or periodontists do a beautiful job on their first implant placement and I have seen some so called implantologists who do hundreds of implants do them all really poorly!)

BEFORE YOU DECIDE ON AN IMPLANTOLOGIST,
ASK A FEW QUESTIONS:

- ARE YOU A MEMBER OF (AAID)
THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF IMPLANT DENTISTRY? (The AAID is an organization of dentists who like to do implants. So is the Academy of Osseointegration and the American Academy of Implant Prosthodontists and several other organizations. None of these organizations have any official status in Dentistry nor does membership impart any special ability or training.)

CREDENTIALLED MEMBERSHIP REQUIRES PROOF OF MASTERY OF SEVERAL IMPLANT SYSTEMS AND THE COMPLETION OF RIGOROUS WRITTEN AND ORAL EXAMINATIONS. (This is not proof because there is no definitive academic program that participants must follow.)

- APPROXIMATELY HOW MANY IMPLANTS HAVE YOU DONE? (We know that there is a significant learning curve in this field, but after the first 50, research shows a fairly constant result. And again, specialty trained individuals usually pick this field up quite rapidly. It is not important how many you have done, just how well you do them....)

THERE IS NO SUBSTITUTE FOR EXPERIENCE, SO BEWARE OF THE IMPLANTOLOGIST WHO HAS DONE ONLY A FEW IMPLANTS. (Experience does NOT assure Quality!)

- WHAT TYPE OF IMPLANTS DO YOU DO?

THE IMPLANTOLOGIST MUST KNOW ABOUT ALL THE PROVEN TYPES OF IMPLANTS.....BEWARE! (Absolutely ridiculous!. Think about it for a minute. I would much rather go to someone who has mastered one implant system and does it real well than to some "jack of all trades". Besides, research has shown that endosseous root form implants have the highest success rates in all applications so why would anyone want to go into the lesser systems....?)

- DO YOU BELIEVE IN IMPLANTS ONLY AS A LAST RESORT?

AN INEXPERIENCED IMPLANTOLOGIST WILL ALWAYS FIND REASONS FOR NOT DOING THE IMPLANT PROCEDURE NO MATTER HOW BADLY YOU NEED IMPLANTS, BECAUSE THEY HAVE NOT MASTERED THE ART OF IMPLANTOLOGY YET. (Hold onto your hat... Except for the "Implantologist" part, I agree with this statement. The biggest problem with this technology is that there are not enough dentists trained in it. That will correct as time goes by...)

- DO YOU GUARANTEE THAT MY IMPLANTS WILL LAST?

BEWARE OF THE IMPLANTOLOGIST WHO CLAIMS THEY CAN DO EVERYTHING AND GUARANTEE THEIR IMPLANTS WILL WORK FOREVER. (I also agree with this statement although, you should be assured that the dentist performing the service stands behind it.)

FINALLY, DO YOUR HOMEWORK AND HAVE A LIST OF QUESTIONS READY BEFORE YOUR APPOINTMENT. IF HE REFUSES TO ANSWER ANY OF YOUR QUESTIONS, GET A SECOND AND THIRD OPINION. TO BE SAFE, GET ALL THE FACTS BEFORE YOU DECIDE. (I agree with this as well.)

I practice in an area of the country where there happens to be a fairly large number of dentists who refer to themselves as "implantologists". My impression has usually been that their work does not live up to the standards of dentistry utilizing dental implants that many specialists would uphold. Of course there are specialist who can not do this phase of dentistry real well either. If you want to find a dentist that is competent in this area of dentistry, you could look at the following points:

- Does the dentist providing the specific procedure have a good reputation for this type of work?

- Are there other dentists who would recommend this individual?

- Does the dentist have specialty training?

- Is the dentist certified by a legitimate specialty board? (Check with the American Dental Association if you are not sure.

- Have you talked to other patients of this dentist who have had the same procedure?

- Are you comfortable with this dentist?

- Do you feel reasonably assured that this dentist will stand behind his or her work?

- Did you get another opinion?