



SEATTLE STUDY CLUB®

Clinical Sessions: This Program Really Works

Gerard Chiche, DDS

I remember the first time Michael Cohen asked me to present to a Seattle Study Club. I thought at that time that it was going to be a regular presentation to a regular group and little did I know that a unique journey was about to begin for all of us. Ten years later, I would like to reflect back on this amazing experience and share a few thoughts. I have presented to a vast majority of the clubs and I had the pleasure to revisit a very large number a second time and quite a few for a third time. I have witnessed the evolution of these groups and now that many of them are realizing their full potential, I can see first-hand Michael's vision being fulfilled club after club. To put it very mildly, this program really works and here are three areas which I believe are instrumental in this process:

First, the benefit of regular lectures offered by speakers who believe in quality dentistry and high standards. I like to tell starter groups that in effect, they have created their own personal continuing education program where these speakers come to them and especially for them. This represented most of my contribution in the early years.

Second, treatment planning sessions are unique to the Seattle Study Club. When I present a treatment plan seminar to a study club which happens to be outside of the Club network, the participants discover a whole new experience which they never encountered before and they are amazed throughout the whole session. They simply are not used to plan together, discuss options and brainstorm in a structured forum, and when they realize the value of this approach they always comment: "we've never had this before." The treatment planning sessions are not only at the heart of the Seattle Study Club, they are part of the routine, which in turn is part of the uniqueness of the whole thing.

From a personal standpoint, the vast majority of my programs to the clubs are now treatment planning sessions and I owe it to Michael and Suzanne that they focused me early on in that direction: I find it to be quite a thrilling experience to share my cases as part of a treatment planning session and have the members brainstorm in round tables: we typically structure a treatment plan discussion after the case is evaluated and the real benefit of this interactive process is that it makes us all think. Whether it is a starter group or a very seasoned one, I found that every single club stays very focused through the whole day because the members know that the interaction and the camaraderie experienced are very special and go way beyond what any dental convention or society meeting can offer. I witnessed many magic moments during these sessions just watching the participants, because such is the power of the whole formula: a club with a vision and a mission. Do not take this for granted, I saw through the last 15 years many regular study clubs form and disband later for lack of such a developmental program. When I come back to any Seattle Study Club let's say three or four years after the initial presentation, I see all the transformation that took place in many aspects: there is an evident maturity, there is friendship and mutual respect, and above all, the continuing education has settled in and the approach to treatment and the treatment standards are as high as one can expect. Nobody talks about cutting corners, but everyone is perfectly at ease discussing the merits of an ideal interdisciplinary treatment plan versus the benefits of a more straightforward option for that case until a consensus is reached (often with a few jokes here and there and a lot of laughter).

Third, the interdisciplinary format which Michael envisioned from the start with so much conviction was ahead of his time. Laying this interdisciplinary foundation early on has allowed all of us to address over the years the demands of implant dentistry, orthodontic treatment and periodontal and oral and maxillofacial surgical treatment. I believe that this integration is another unique facet of the Seattle Study Club and I see this interdisciplinary thinking taking place very naturally during our treatment planning sessions. As implant dentistry is maturing to the highest aesthetic standards and puts emphasis on the team approach more than before, all the clubs are perfectly positioned to provide in their continuum the various elements for the proper interdisciplinary management of our implant patients at any level.

I like to always tell the starter clubs that when I look at the Seattle Study Club from the outside as a presenter, I find it to be the best and most innovative education program I have ever witnessed because its mission and its vision are based on quality dentistry, interdisciplinary care and life-long learning, all structured in a very innovative and interactive format. It does not exist anywhere else and for all this, and so much more, we can all say to Michael and Suzanne: THANKS FOR THE JOURNEY!