

MODERN ORAL IMPLANTOLOGY: DEVELOPMENTS, CHALLENGES, AND CLINICAL PERSPECTIVES

Kamel Earar¹, Irina Adrian Beuran^{2*}, Norina Consuela Forna^{3*}, Alina-Ramona Dimofte¹, Marius Vacaru Carnaru¹, Ioan Sarbu²

1 Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacy, University "Dunarea de Jos" Galati, Romania

2 Carol Davila University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Bucuresti, Romania

3 University of Medicine and Pharmacy "Grigore T. Popa", Iasi, Romania

*Corresponding authors: dririnab@yahoo.com, norina_forna@yahoo.com

All authors have the same contribution.

ABSTRACT

Oral implantology is one of the most advanced branches of modern dental medicine, offering effective solutions for the functional and aesthetic rehabilitation of edentations. This review summarizes the essential aspects of implantology, from fundamental biological principles to the latest research directions. The mechanisms of osseointegration, the selection of implant materials, the indications and contraindications of treatment, as well as current surgical techniques, are discussed. Particular attention is paid to complications that may occur during treatment and prevention and management strategies. At the same time, the latest innovations are highlighted, such as the use of artificial intelligence, digital technology in planning, and the development of bioactive or personalized implants through 3D printing. The paper emphasizes the need for an interdisciplinary approach, a rigorous therapeutic protocol, and active collaboration with the patient to ensure the long-term success of implant-supported restorations. In conclusion, oral implantology continues to evolve, offering new therapeutic possibilities and opening promising directions in regenerative medicine and digital dentistry.

Keywords: oral implantology, osseointegration, biomimetic materials, guided surgery, peri-implant complications, digital technology, bone regeneration

Introduction

Oral implantology is one of the most dynamic and innovative branches of dental medicine, offering effective and sustainable solutions for the functional and aesthetic restoration of teeth. From the first experimental trials to modern osseointegrated implants, this discipline has seen impressive development, supported by advances in biotechnology, digital imaging and materials science. In the current context, dental implants are no longer considered options of last resort, but first-line solutions for partial and total edentulousness, contributing essentially to improving the quality of life of patients [1-3].

The success of modern implantology is based on the concept of osseointegration, defined as the direct structural and functional connection between living bone and the implant surface. The introduction of this principle by Per-Ingvar Brånemark revolutionized the field, paving the way for the development of biocompatible, durable and functional dental implants. Over time, research has shown that primary stability, recipient bone quality, and adherence to a rigorous surgical protocol are critical factors in achieving successful osseointegration. In addition, careful patient selection and control of systemic or local

risk factors have become essential steps in implant treatment planning [1-4].

As the demand for implant treatments has increased, so needs to standardize procedures, optimize materials, and adapt techniques to a variety of clinical situations. Thus, oral implantology has evolved from an elitist practice, reserved for complex cases, to a widely accessible therapeutic standard. The introduction of digital technologies in planning, such as cone beam computed tomography (CBCT) and 3D planning software, has allowed for increased accuracy in implant positioning and greater predictability of results. Personalized surgical guides, made using CAD/CAM technology, contribute to reducing surgical errors and shortening the intervention time [3-6].

The development of biocompatible materials, especially titanium and its alloys, has been instrumental in achieving implants with excellent mechanical properties and high tissue compatibility. In recent years, interest in implants made of zirconium or ceramic composite materials has increased, due to their superior aesthetics and reduced potential for inflammatory reactions. In parallel, the implant surfaces were modified by various technologies (sandblasted, anodized, coated with hydroxyapatite) to stimulate bone formation and speed up integration [4-6].

Oral implantology is not without its challenges, and complications – whether early or late – require a careful approach, based on evidence and clinical experience. Among them, peri-implant infections, marginal bone loss or integration failure require a continuous re-evaluation of the techniques and materials used. Therefore, scientific research in this field is essential and constantly aims to optimize protocols,

identify new biomaterials and develop regenerative solutions that ensure long-term functionality [6-8].

Modern implantology cannot be separated from the social, economic and psychological context of the patient. Increased expectations regarding aesthetics, comfort, and durability of treatment require a multidisciplinary approach, in which collaboration between surgeons, prosthetists, periodontists, and dental technicians is fundamental. Choosing an individually tailored treatment plan, with a focus on prophylaxis and maintenance, contributes decisively to the long-term success of implant-supported restorations [6-8].

The accelerated pace of innovations, a constant updating of knowledge is essential, as well as a periodic review of the literature. This review aims to synthesize the essential information on modern oral implantology, focusing on fundamental biological principles, materials used, current surgical techniques, as well as future research directions. The aim is to provide a clear and up-to-date picture of the advances in the field, while highlighting the advantages, limitations and perspectives of this essential discipline in contemporary dentistry [3,6-8].

Fundamentals of Oral Implantology

At the basis of the success of implant treatments are a series of biological, biomechanical and clinical principles, which guide each stage of dental implant planning and implementation. Understanding and applying these principles is essential for achieving stable osseointegration, preventing complications, and ensuring lasting functionality. Modern oral implantology is based on the concept of

osseointegration, defined as a direct structural and functional connection between the living bone and the implant surface, without the interposition of fibrous connective tissue. This biological integration is the result of a complex cascade of cellular and molecular processes, involving the formation of new bone in intimate contact with the implant material [6-9].

The first fundamental principle is the careful selection of the patient since the success of osseointegration depends directly on the general state of health, local bone status, oral hygiene, and habits of the patient. Factors such as smoking, uncontrolled diabetes, osteoporosis, or bisphosphonate treatments can negatively influence bone healing and implant stability. Careful evaluation of these

systemic and local factors should be performed before initiating treatment and requires a multidisciplinary approach, especially in patients with comorbidities [7-10].

The quality and quantity of the alveolar bone is another central element in the success of the implant. Bone density, often classified into types from D1 (very dense) to D4 (very porous), determines the degree of primary stability – i.e. the immediate mechanical fixation of the implant in the bone. A high primary stability is essential, especially in cases with immediate loading. In cases where the available bone is insufficient, bone augmentation techniques such as autogenic grafts, bone replacement materials or guided tissue regeneration are resorted to [6-11].

Table 1. This table summarizes the fundamental principles of oral implantology, highlighting each key concept, its description, and clinical relevance. The information provides an essential basis for understanding the critical steps in the planning and success of dental implant treatments [3-11].

<i>Fundamental principle</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Clinical importance</i>
<i>Osseointegration</i>	Formation of a direct and stable connection between living bone and the implant surface, without interposed fibrous tissue.	Biological foundation of implant success.
<i>Primary stability</i>	Initial mechanical fixation of the implant in the bone is essential for successful osseointegration.	Influences whether immediate loading is possible.
<i>Bone quality and quantity</i>	Determines whether the implant can be directly placed or if bone augmentation is required.	Conditions implant choice and surgical technique.
<i>Implant selection</i>	The implant must be adapted to the patient's anatomy, bone type, and prosthetic plan.	Ensures functional and aesthetic integration.
<i>Surgical protocol compliance</i>	Includes the use of a sterile protocol, adequate irrigation, and torque control.	Prevents early complications and osseointegration failure.
<i>Prosthetic loading</i>	Can be immediate, early, or delayed, depending on implant stability and bone quality.	Determines the timing of prosthetic attachment.

Occlusal force distribution	A correct prosthetic design prevents overloading and marginal bone loss.	Increases restoration durability and reduces complication risks.
Long-term maintenance and hygiene	Regular follow-ups, professional cleaning, and patient cooperation are essential for long-term success.	Prevents peri-implantitis and long-term bone loss.

The choice of the right implant – in terms of shape, length, diameter and surface area – must be adapted to the local anatomy and prosthetic requirements. Over time, implant design has evolved to facilitate atraumatic insertion, uniform distribution of occlusal forces, and maintenance of peri-implant tissues. The treated surfaces, micro- and macro-roughness, as well as the various types of coatings (such as those with hydroxyapatite or anodic treatments) aim to accelerate the osseointegration process and increase secondary stability [6-9].

Another key principle is the strict adherence to the surgical technique and established protocols. Atraumatic insertion of the implant, avoiding overheating of the bone by using proper irrigation, controlling the insertion torque, and adhering to the healing period are determining factors for successful integration. Also, the sterility of the operative environment, rigorous presurgical planning and the use of surgical guidelines are essential to avoid intraoperative and postoperative complications [6,8-10].

As far as prosthetic loading is concerned, modern implantology allows the application of variable protocols, depending on the case: immediate loading, early loading or delayed loading. Choosing the right time to attach prosthetic work depends on several factors, including primary stability, bone type, and implant positioning. Although immediate loading is aesthetically and functionally attractive, it

should be applied with caution and only under optimal biomechanical control [6-9].

The prosthetic integration of implants also implies compliance with the principles of biomechanics, so that the masticatory forces are distributed evenly and do not overload the implant or the adjacent bone. A correct prosthetic design, focused on occlusal stability, balanced contacts and uniform distribution of loads, is essential for the prevention of marginal bone loss or fracture of prosthetic components. The choice of the type of restoration (cemented, screwed, fixed or movable) should be made according to the clinical context, the patient's wishes and the possibilities of long-term maintenance [6-10].

Last but not least, maintaining long-term results implies an active collaboration between doctor and patient. A rigorous oral hygiene program, periodic check-ups, professional prophylaxis and continuous patient education are indispensable elements in preventing peri-implantitis and ensuring the longevity of the restoration [9-11].

Surgical techniques in implantology

The surgical techniques used in oral implantology have evolved significantly in recent decades, with the development of new technologies, improvements in materials, and a deeper understanding of bone biology and tissue healing. Choosing the appropriate surgical method is essential

to ensure effective osseointegration and to achieve a lasting functional and aesthetic result. The implant insertion procedure must be adapted to each clinical case, taking into account the anatomical particularities, bone density and volume, the planned positioning of the implant and the condition of the soft tissues [9-12].

In conventional implantology, the most commonly used technique is flap implant insertion, which involves detaching a muco-periosteal flap to expose the alveolar bone and allow a direct visualization of the surgical field. This approach allows for better control over implant positioning and facilitates additional procedures such as bone augmentations or soft tissue manipulation. However, in certain selected cases, the flapless technique can be chosen, less

invasive, which involves perforating the gum with a surgical guide or special drill, reducing the operative time and postoperative discomfort, but requiring extremely precise preoperative planning [10-12].

The timing of implant insertion is also an essential element in surgical planning. Immediate post-extraction insertion of the implant, when performed under favorable conditions, can help preserve the alveolar ridge and reduce the overall duration of treatment. However, this technique requires careful case selection and excellent primary stability. Delayed insertion, after complete healing of the bone (usually after 3-6 months), offers greater predictability, and is still preferred in many clinical situations [10-13].

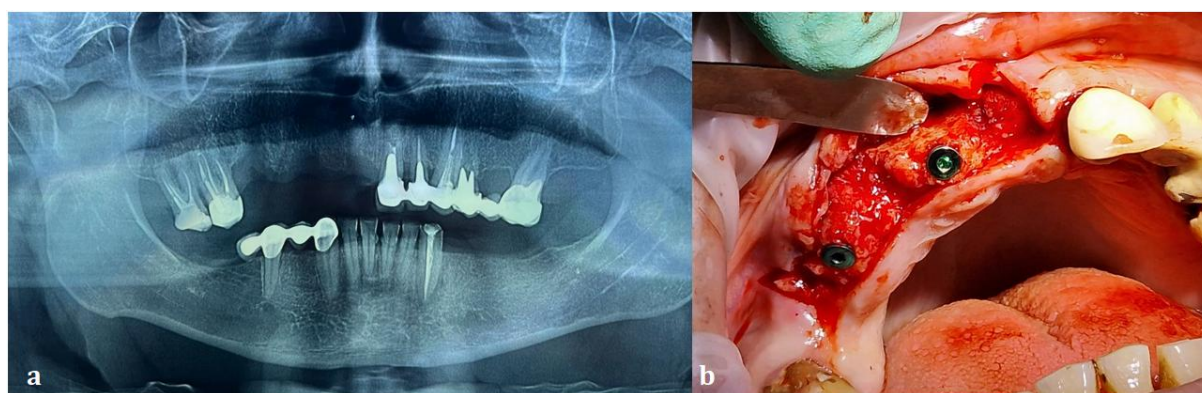


Figure 1. a: Preoperative panoramic radiograph highlighting the status of edentulousness and the bone volume available in the upper quadrant I. b: Intraoperative image illustrating the insertion of dental implants in the upper quadrant I, with the exposure of the alveolar ridge and the optimal positioning of the implants.

An essential element in modern implant surgery is the use of digital technology for preoperative planning and intervention guidance. By integrating images obtained by cone beam computed tomography (CBCT) and digital intraoral scans, personalized surgical guides can be

created that allow precise positioning of the implants in relation to the anatomical structures and the final prosthetic plane. The guides can be static – made in the laboratory and fixed during the intervention – or dynamic, in the case of using real-time computerized systems. These technologies

contribute to reducing risks, optimizing the position of implants and shortening the operative time [10-12].

In cases where bone volume is insufficient, pre-implant surgery involves the use of bone augmentation techniques, such as autogenic grafts, bone substitutes, guided tissue regeneration or sinus lift. These procedures can be performed before the implant is inserted or concomitantly, depending on the volume and quality of the existing bone. The choice of augmentation method is determined by the complexity of the defect and the goals of the final prosthetic restoration [8,10-13].

In addition to the surgical technique itself, it is essential to adhere to antiseptic principles, a rigorous sterilization protocol, and detailed planning to prevent intra- and postoperative complications. Also, the postoperative protocol must include careful supervision of the healing process, rigorous hygiene of the operated area and adaptation of the treatment to the patient's biological response [10-13].

Materials used in oral implantology

The selection of materials used in oral implantology plays a fundamental role in the long-term success of the treatment, influencing the osseointegration processes, mechanical stability, biocompatibility and aesthetic acceptance of the restoration. The choice of dental implant material is not accidental, but the result of a balance between the biological, mechanical and aesthetic requirements of the bone structure and the oral environment. Currently, two main categories of materials are frequently used in the manufacture of dental implants: metals, especially titanium and its alloys, and ceramic materials, especially zirconia,

each with specific advantages and limitations [10-13].

Titanium is considered the gold standard in oral implantology, due to its excellent characteristics of biocompatibility, mechanical strength, corrosion resistance, and ability to form a direct bond with living bone. Its osseointegration properties have been demonstrated in numerous clinical and experimental studies, and side effects or rejection are extremely rare. Titanium implant surfaces are often treated by sandblasting, anodizing, acid etching, or applying bioactive layers to increase roughness and stimulate cell attachment. Surface modification has the role of accelerating the bone formation process and increasing the secondary stability of the implant [11-14].

Titanium alloys, such as Ti-6Al-4V, offer added mechanical strength, being preferred in areas subject to high masticatory forces or in cases where a small implant size is required. Although titanium has a metallic gray color, which can sometimes be visible through the gum in aesthetic areas, its biological and mechanical advantages keep it at the top of clinical preferences [11-15].

Zirconia (yttrium-stabilized zirconium oxide) has been introduced as an alternative to titanium, especially for patients with high aesthetic requirements or those with sensitivity or allergy to metals. Zirconia implants are white in color, offering superior aesthetics in the frontal areas and a more harmonious visual integration with the gum. In addition, zirconia exhibits good biocompatibility and high resistance to bacterial buildup, which can reduce the risk of peri-implant inflammation. However, being a ceramic

material, it is more brittle than titanium and has limited mechanical strength, which requires caution in areas with intense occlusal loads or in the case of small implant diameters [11-15].

In addition to the implant material itself, oral implantology frequently involves the use of auxiliary materials, especially in bone augmentation or guided tissue regeneration techniques. Thus, autogenous bone grafts (from the patient), allografts (from human donors), xenografts (of animal origin) or alloplastic (synthetic) materials are used to reconstruct deficient bone volumes and create favorable conditions for osseointegration. These materials are selected based on the size and location of the defect, the time available for healing, and the goals of the final restoration. Also, collagen or synthetic membranes are used to protect and guide bone regeneration, preventing soft tissue invasion into the healing area [11-16].

Implant-related prosthetic systems – such as abutments, healing screws and fasteners – are made of compatible materials, such as titanium, zirconia or combinations thereof, depending on the aesthetic and functional requirements of each case. In recent years, research in the field of implantological materials has focused on the development of new biomaterials with osteoinductive, antimicrobial properties or capable of locally releasing growth factors, opening new treatment directions in bone regeneration and prevention of peri-implantitis [13-16].

Indications, contraindications and new research directions

Oral implantology offers effective solutions for the rehabilitation of

edentations, but the success of the treatment depends largely on a rigorous selection of cases. Establishing the correct indications and identifying contraindications are essential steps in the planning of implant treatment, requiring a careful evaluation of both the patient's general health and the local particularities of the prosthetic field [13-17].

The indications for dental implants are extensive and include both single-tooth and partial or total edentulousness. Partially or totally edentulous patients who want a fixed restoration, with increased stability, are ideal candidates, especially when traditional dentures no longer offer optimal comfort or functionality. Implants are also indicated in cases where the teeth neighboring the breach cannot or should not be prepared for conventional prosthetic works, such as dental bridges. At the same time, implantology is a viable solution for patients suffering from moderate bone atrophy, in which case bone augmentation techniques can be applied to create the necessary support for implant insertion [14-17].

In addition to obvious indications, it is essential to identify and evaluate contraindications. These can be absolute or relative. Absolute contraindications, which temporarily or definitively exclude the possibility of implant treatment, include severe uncontrolled systemic disorders such as decompensated cardiovascular diseases, major hematological disorders, severe immunosuppression, active oncological therapies or metabolic bone diseases in advanced stages. In these situations, the risk of intra- or postoperative complications is too high to justify the intervention. Also, the complete lack of patient cooperation, poor oral hygiene and the absence of motivation

to maintain long-term results are critical factors that contraindicate intervention [14-18].

Relative contraindications include conditions that can be managed or compensated for by medical treatments, adjustments to the surgical protocol, or careful planning. These include smoking, controlled diabetes, treated osteoporosis, bruxism, a history of active periodontal disease, and moderate alcohol consumption. In these cases, the success of the treatment depends on interdisciplinary collaboration and careful monitoring of the patient throughout the therapy. Also, local aspects such as reduced bone volume, atrophic alveolar crest or proximity to sensitive anatomical structures (inferior alveolar nerve, maxillary sinus) require careful planning, often with the help of three-dimensional imaging and digital technology [14-18].

Modern oral implantology has evolved significantly, integrating advanced technologies such as guided surgery and innovative biomaterials, but clinical challenges such as peri-implantitis and complications associated with osseointegration persist. In this context, essential oils become a promising complementary solution due to their antimicrobial and anti-inflammatory properties. The application of essential oils such as tea tree, lavender, or eucalyptus in the clinical protocol can reduce bacterial load, relieve peri-implant inflammation and support postoperative healing. Thus, the association of modern implantology with natural essential oil-based therapies offers improved clinical perspectives, ensuring effective, minimally invasive and patient-oriented treatments [19-23].

Modern oral implantology has developed spectacularly through digital technologies, high-performance biomaterials and guided surgery, but clinical challenges, including dental inclusions, remain current. Dental inclusion, common in young patients, sometimes complicates therapeutic plans through bone resorptions and insufficient prosthetic space. Addressing these cases requires precise and minimally invasive preimplantation interventions. Thus, the correct management of dental inclusions, combined with advanced implantology techniques, optimizes clinical outcomes, ensuring implant stability, preventing postoperative complications and improving long-term patient comfort and satisfaction [24-35].

Modern oral implantology has evolved considerably by integrating advanced biomaterials, which improve the osseointegration and stability of implants. Innovative biomaterials, such as bioactive ceramics, hydroxyapatite and biodegradable polymers, contribute significantly to bone regeneration and reduce clinical complications, including peri-implantitis[36-39]. However, biocompatibility, durability, and immune response challenges require further research [36-46]. Exploiting the potential of biomaterials in oral implantology offers new clinical perspectives, through personalized and effective, minimally invasive treatments that ensure optimal healing, increased therapeutic success and significant improvement of the quality of life of edentulous patients in the long term [47].

Conclusions

Oral implantology has established itself as an essential discipline in contemporary dentistry, offering high-performance therapeutic solutions for the restoration of edentulosity, with significant benefits both functionally and aesthetically. The constant evolution of this specialty is supported by an increasingly deep understanding of the biological mechanisms of osseointegration, the refinement of surgical techniques and the development of increasingly high-performance materials. The integration of digital technologies, artificial intelligence and regenerative biomaterials contributes to increasing the predictability of treatment and reducing the associated risks.

In order to achieve stable and long-lasting results, the correct application of the

fundamental principles of implantology is essential, starting with careful patient selection, rigorous three-dimensional planning, and adherence to surgical and prosthetic protocols. The success of an implant-prosthetic treatment depends not only on technical workmanship, but also on good communication with the patient, on his involvement in maintaining proper oral hygiene and on careful periodic monitoring.

Although success rates are high, oral implantology is not without its challenges, and complications, when they occur, must be managed promptly and effectively. Therefore, the approach must be individualized, based on clinical evidence and adapted to each case.

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