

Congratulations to Duke Heller, DDS, MS—Pioneer, Teacher, and Mentor

Alfred “Duke” Heller (DDS, 1962, MS, 1974, The Ohio State University) was honored in Chicago, Ill, at the American Academy of Implant Dentistry’s Central District meeting on Friday, June 7, 2013, for his contributions to Implant Dentistry. Duke helped pioneer Implant Dentistry in the 60s when it did not have the support of academia or organized Dentistry. Duke has been a trusted colleague, mentor, and friend to many of us for more than 30 years. He has been and is still an achiever and teacher.

Dr Heller realized early that the dental profession was not successfully meeting patients’ functional and esthetic desires with conventional prosthetics. Following 10 years of implant placement in general practice, he returned to endodontic specialty training to do research in implant dentistry. His involvement with implant research enables him to advance and develop the field of implant surgery. Duke has completed two US Food and Drug Administration studies associated with dental implants and bone grafting materials. He has also published several articles, three of which appear in *Journal of Oral Implantology*.¹⁻³

He realized that education was the foundation to making implant dentistry mainstream. He founded the Midwest Implant Institute (MII) in 1980 to facilitate the advancement of implant education for Dental Specialists and General Practitioners. Many of us, including myself, received our implant education from Duke and several other excellent instructors (eg, Jack Hahn, Craig Cooper) at MII. Duke centered his teaching on a foundation of presenting material from introductory level to the most advanced in implant surgery and related

prosthetics. To make the education have take-home value, Duke would supervise students performing surgery on their own patients. He used his famous “Step by Step” technique for teaching surgical techniques. I have fond memories of my staff and me referring to “Step by Step” sheets that we would make and hang on the operatory wall for reference while performing surgery. Duke helped bring Implant Dentistry to academia by teaching hands-on dental implant surgery postgraduate continuums in eight American dental colleges.

Duke went beyond traditional education when he also founded “Transforming Dentistry,” which provides help to the dental community for profession-related stresses.

Implant Dentistry salutes Duke Heller for innovation, dedication, and most of all for sharing his time and talents.

May Duke and his wife, Wanda, enjoy life, grandchildren, and good health in the coming years.

Congratulations Duke!

James L. Rutkowski, DMD, PhD
Editor-in-Chief
Journal of Oral Implantology

REFERENCES

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3. Driskell TD, Heller AL. Clinical use of aluminum oxide endosseous implants. *J Oral Implantol*. 1977;7:53–76.