

## Marketing Myths about Dental Implants

**Myth: Implant “super” centers are the leaders in implant dentistry and they have more experience than other practices.**

Certainly a few of the doctors involved with “super” centers do have a great deal of experience and truly are leaders in implant dentistry. However, there are hundreds of clinicians in private practice who are also leaders in implant dentistry, publishing articles in scientific journals and lecturing to other clinicians throughout the world. Several of these leaders in the profession have a great deal more experience than most of the doctors in the “super” centers.

“Super” centers often refer to their “collective” experience and volume of implants placed (in multiple centers) throughout their promotional materials. However, volume does not necessarily equate to quality care, expertise, or leadership in the profession. Individualized treatment plans for patients, quality treatment provided over several years with successful results, and the expertise of the doctors are much more important considerations than volume of implants placed in multiple centers.

Patients should consult their general dentists for recommendations on implant treatment and a referral to an experienced surgical specialist. They should also research their options carefully – and not be swayed by slick advertising. More information can be obtained by visiting [www.missingteeth.org](http://www.missingteeth.org).

**Myth: It is better for patients to have implant treatment at a “super” center, as this eliminates the problems associated with coordination between different offices.**

While it is definitely more convenient to have everything under one roof, it is important to keep in mind that implant treatment involves surgical and complex prosthetic procedures. Therefore, the expertise and credentials of the doctors should be a more important consideration than convenience.

If an experienced team of doctors is providing treatment, there are rarely any problems for patients, such as those implied in advertisements and other promotional materials from implant “super” centers.

Patients considering implant treatment should visit [www.missingteeth.org](http://www.missingteeth.org) for more information regarding selection of an experienced team of doctors.

**Myth: Only “super” centers have specialists providing implant treatment and anyone other than oral surgeons and prosthodontists is not as qualified.**

This is not true. Many advertisements and promotional materials lead the reader to believe that oral surgeons are the only surgical specialists qualified to place implants. However, there are thousands of highly qualified, experienced periodontists (also surgical specialists) that have been successfully placing implants for many years.

Numerous periodontists are considered leaders in implant dentistry, researching new techniques, teaching at major dental schools, publishing articles for scientific journals, lecturing to fellow clinicians, and developing educational programs for dental professionals. It is true that prosthodontists are specialists in tooth replacement and most patients requiring extremely complex treatment are usually referred to them. However, there are also thousands of highly skilled general dentists who have been successfully providing implant treatment, together with their surgical specialists as a team, for countless patients throughout the country for many years.

**Myth: Traditional implant treatment takes longer and is more expensive than the “21st Century” procedures provided at implant “super” centers.**

The procedure that you are referring to is called “All-on-4” and although relatively new, there have been reasonably good results in the right situations. However, experienced clinicians usually recommend traditional implant treatment because they believe that supporting an entire arch of teeth on only four implants is not as stable long-term as using five or six implants. Also, patients who have worn dentures for years and have lost a considerable amount of bone are rarely candidates for “All-on-4” procedures.

The surgical procedures and temporary replacement teeth are provided in one day; however, the diagnostics and treatment planning for “All-on-4” can take several weeks. In

addition, some “super” centers do not provide the final replacement teeth for up to 8 months and there can be an additional charge for the final prosthesis. Regarding the cost issues, there are other treatment options available to replace dentures that are much more economical.

More importantly, many of these traditional treatment options provide a better functional and esthetic result for patients, particularly for patients with severe bone resorption.

Finally, “Teeth-in-a-day” and “All-on-4” implants are not provided exclusively by implant “super” centers. If you are interested in this type of treatment, ask your dentist if you could be a candidate, and ask to be referred to a surgical specialist who can provide this type of treatment.

**Myth:** Traditional implant treatment requires more than four implants, as well as bone grafting, and patients have to live without teeth during treatment.

As indicated above, not everyone is a candidate for “All-on-4” implants due to significant bone loss resulting from wearing dentures for an extended period of time. In many of these situations, traditional implant treatment is recommended and bone grafting is often necessary for patients who have experienced considerable bone loss in order to achieve the best esthetic and functional results.

Patients never have to live without teeth during treatment. There are numerous removable and fixed options for temporary replacement teeth to ensure patient comfort and confidence through the treatment sequence.

Traditional treatment for the upper jaw will often require more than four implants because of the bone quality; however, lower dentures can be replaced with a traditional implant prosthesis supported by only two to four implants. In fact, two implants supporting a special lower denture that attaches to the implants is now considered standard of care for the lower jaw.

**Myth:** The success rates for traditional implant treatment are not as high as the success rates for treatment provided at “super” centers.

This is absolutely false. In fact, there is no basis for this statement in the scientific literature. The success rates of traditional implant treatment are documented for over 50 years. “All-on-4” implants have documented clinical data for

less than 10 years – and studies in the literature do not demonstrate that success rates are any higher than those for traditional implant treatment.

**Myth:** Only implant “super” centers provide 3D cone beam imaging (CT) and IV sedation for patients.

This is also inaccurate. Oral surgeons and periodontists in private practice provide sedation for the comfort of their patients. Many of these surgical specialists also have cone beam imaging available in their offices. And those surgical specialists who do not have 3D cone beam imaging in their offices typically work closely with a center that does provide these special x-rays as needed for treatment planning.

**Myth:** All dental implant treatment is the same quality, so it makes sense to shop for the lowest cost possible.

This couldn’t be further from the truth. Unfortunately, not every dentist who performs implant procedures provides quality dental implant treatment. And many of the dentists promoting “bargain” implant fees are not using quality implants and components, which is frightening considering that this is a medical device being implanted into a human being! In this economy, cost is often an issue for many people. However, since dental implant treatment involves a surgical procedure and complex prosthetics, the experience of the surgical specialist and the prosthodontist, or restorative dentist, and the quality of the implants and components should be higher priorities than the cost of treatment.

“Bargain” implant treatment presents a multitude of potential problems other than the use of inferior implants and components. Cutting corners to lower the cost often involves rushing through the diagnostic and treatment-planning phase, which rarely produces optimal results. Another compromise that is often made in order to cut costs is using cheap labs that fabricate poor quality and ill-fitting replacement teeth, resulting in functional problems and poor esthetics.

All too often, people who opt for cheap implant treatment end up having additional treatment to correct the problems resulting from poor planning, lab issues, and/or substandard implants and components. So, in the long run, it is actually more costly to proceed with cheap implant treatment, as opposed to having it done properly in the first place. Remember, with implant dentistry, you get what you pay for...and if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

