

Special Editorial

To the Memory of the Late Professor Brånemark the highly respected teacher of the world

Yung-Soo Kim, DDS, MS, MSc, PhD

Professor Emeritus, Seoul National University School of Dentistry, Seoul, Republic of Korea

Dear Professor Brånemark,

When I first met you at the Karlanderska hospital, I felt as if I stood before a god and my heart almost stopped beating in excitement. And your renowned book "Tissue integrated prostheses" seemed to me to be a bible.

I searched all over the world for thirteen years from 1972 to 1985 to find a place where I could learn the special implant protocol for the patients. However it was not possible for me to find it anywhere else. Your osseointegrated implantology was no doubt the miracle of Jesus Christ to me.

All scientists denied the concept of bonding foreign materials of any kind to the bone tissue until 1970's. Even contemporary implantologists advocated the theory of fibrous tissue integration to act as a natural periodontal ligament. Had it not been for your historical findings, we would still have been lost in a maze of fibrous-integration theory.

You have opened a new world of clinical success beyond the past mistake. The outcome from the invention of the very careful and precise surgical and prosthetic protocol has revolutionized everything in both basic and clinical dental sciences.

Now I could recall the story that you told me about several North Korean dentists who visited Gothenburg in 1985 to take courses and to have some discussions. You promised to give me an X-ray copy of Kim Il Sung, the former premier of North Korean regime.

Following the microcirculation study, in which you tried to remove titanium chamber only to find that the bone tissue was stuck to chamber, you immediately turned to dental cripples as a new target. This fact reminded us once again that many important findings were discovered quite unexpectedly and accidentally. You led us to realize the point that a research scientist must pay attention not only to the intended research but also to the accurate insight for the related minor and trivial matter.

By the time that the machined fixture surface was replaced by the micro rough surface, I gathered from what you said that you showed a little dissatisfaction as an original inventor. So I said in an attempt to solace you that I also use smooth machined implant, and then you said to me, "you are my real friend" Novum Implant, another important invention of yours was made of conventional surface but the succeeding item Zygora was anodic oxidated. I took it for granted that you wisely accepted the trend of the time.

You filed up the 10 years of basic and animal experiments, followed by 15 years of human experiments. I am certain that your achievements are comparable, if not superior, to that of Alfred Nobel. In June, 1990, at the "osseointegration 25 years" celebration meeting which was held in Gothenburg, the very first patient Ghosta Lasson appeared as an eyewitness. And there were also many patients who asked, "How long will it last?" Mr. Lasson died in 2006 after using it for 40 years, and we were also anxious to know about that more than our patients. I was confident that it could last forever because I already had firm belief. I understand the second patient is still alive, 48 years after the fixture.

Your research was initiated first in orthopedic field but the most fruitful result was reaped in dentistry. I threw away all of my fibrous integrated implant materials that I used since 1979. and I started to apply the Brånemark system to my patients for the first time in my life in 1986 and the patient is still using the implant for nearly 29 years.

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Professor Brånemark.

You have visited Korea, a small country in the Orient more than five times, and encouraged and inspired us with warm heart. I would like to take this opportunity to express our deep appreciation for your teaching and guidance.

So far multimillion edentulous patients have been benefitted by the system. My own cases, as of today, are limited to 1250 patients with 6000 fixtures. According to a daily newspaper, half of million implants are placed every year in Korea.

My major field at Seoul National University was edentulism and I believed that osseointegration work was the most honorable and worthwhile area of research to which I could dedicate my life and my professorship. When I returned to my country 1986, I brought the whole Brånemark system and introduced it for the first time in my country at Seoul National University Hospital. I really appreciate your great teaching and supervision for me.

Until the middle of 1970's your research results were not fully recognized and your application for the research fund were rejected several times. Similarly, SNUH administrators judged in those days that it was premature to establish an out-patient clinic. Therefore, I have just concentrated on collecting data and observations with a view to demonstrating them in due course when time is ripe.

Since the year 1987 when the possibility began to show, I decided to make a prototype, obtained a patent and manufacturing permission from Korean FDA, However, in order not to damage your honor, I have just kept it in my research asset.

I know you often visited osseointegration center in Brazilian and elsewhere, to help them out and tried to develop surgical technique for patients needing special care and you have left many invaluable heritages.

And on the day of December 20, 2014, you passed away at the age of eighty five,. I had firm belief in your achievements and philosophy, and I completely disregarded the old curriculum of the undergraduate students. Instead, I taught them osseointegration in the classroom, preclinical laboratory and clinic for 20 years ago.

Sometimes I talk to myself, "at the cutting edge era, if we neglected to study osseointegration, what can dentistry present to the people of the society?" Thanks to your great achievement, however, we could maintain our positions.

I still remember an unforgettable scene in old days. A patient was complaining in the clinic corner, "I cannot understand why dentists are not able to fix the mobile uncomfortable dentures with a spike". The voice now echoes back to my mind. My dear Professor Brånemark, did you also hear by any chance the patient's dissatisfied complaint from far away ?

You looked happy when you mentioned that you coined a new medical term "Osseointegration", which was included in the Webster's English dictionary. I also made a Korean word for osseointegration "Golyuchak"(골유착). Professor Brånemark! I am happy to say that you have had your dream come true. And by virtue of your great achievements, dentists in all over the world have also achieved same dreams of their own, small though it may be.

You were not able to participate in the Las Vegas conference because of your ill health, but through a video lecture you said that when a toothless man leaves the world it's no fair to let him get into a coffin without his teeth. It was a really humorous expression in a very gorgeous atmosphere. Participants were pleased to hear that. I think your talk was based upon Mayan implant history. From now on I hope such toothless funeral will not take place.

You suffered from sickness for a long time before leaving this world. All the people around the world are now in the deep mourning, praying at the same time for your happiness in the other world. My dear Professor Brånemark!

May you rest in eternal peace!