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SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Individual subscription
 1 year (6 issues) \$99
 3 years (18 issues) \$239



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Innovation... it's a beautiful thing!

As a well-known American philosopher by the name of Mark Twain once said, "There are two constants in life: death and taxes!" Without a doubt, in this day and age, Mark Twain's comments still ring entirely true. However, there is certainly another constant in life that each and every one of us has experienced: change. We are all fortunate enough to be living in an incredibly exciting and fun time of the "technology age." Innovation in our society is at its all-time greatest and is changing ever so quickly.

So what has the impact of innovation been on our society? To understand this, we need to look no further than a company by the name of Apple Inc. In 2001, Apple first released a little, but now very well-known, device by the name of the iPod®. This product launch was then followed by the iPod® touch, iPhone®, iPad®, and most recently the iPad® mini. These devices have had a significant global impact on every day living. They have drastically changed the music industry landscape with how we listen to and purchase music. They have changed how each and every one of us live our daily lives, communicate, and exchange information. They have also transformed Apple Inc. into the highest market capitalization company in history. And this is just one example of one company's impact with innovation!

Innovation has also had a tremendous impact on our esteemed profession of orthodontics. In the last 15 years alone, we have seen an explosion in clinical advancements with superelastic wires, self-ligating brackets, functional appliances, indirect bonding techniques, lingual orthodontics, and temporary anchorage devices. Technological advancements in computer hardware has dramatically improved performance, efficiency, and become incredibly cost-efficient where all of us are moving or have moved into the digital orthodontic practice. Practice management, imaging, and online communication software applications have created an incredibly competitive marketplace of not if you're going to buy a software application, but which one will meet your practice's specific needs. Social media (Facebook, Twitter, or blogs) has dominated the World Wide Web with everyone from celebrities to grandparents to children who are online and using it. And innovation has now moved orthodontics into the mobile wireless handheld world of apps. How many orthodontic apps are currently available, and how many apps will be developed in the next 5 years? Haven't we all heard the slogan, "If there is a problem, then there is an app for that"?

And for me personally and most importantly, innovation has transformed our world of orthodontics from the 2D world into the 3D world of orthodontics. We are now diagnosing and treatment planning with 3D imaging for our patients with cone beam computed tomography (CBCT). Invisalign®, SureSmile®, Insignia™, Incognito™, and Harmony have taken our profession to the next level with 3D treatment utilizing intraoral scanning, CBCT, and CAD/CAM for treatment of our patients. The world of 3D printing has made its entry into orthodontics as well. Innovation has forever changed the way we practice and also has changed the expectations of our patients. We are able to provide a higher quality of care to our patients with decreased treatment times and more comfortable and esthetic appliances. Isn't that something that all of our patients want?

As a result, it is my belief that as specialists in our profession of dentistry, it is our responsibility to embrace all of these new innovations, especially if it provides value and benefits for our patients. Is it a challenge for our profession? Absolutely! It involves hard work, dedication, financial investment, and training of our team. As the late, great former CEO of Apple, Steve Jobs once said, "There are two key secrets to success for any business: 1) The people in business need to have a passion for what that they are doing, and 2) The business needs to have an eye for finding talented individuals to become part of the team. Innovation can create frustrations at times because change can be difficult. However, change is good if there is a good reason to change. Innovation can be incredibly cool and trendy, so let's have fun and enjoy whatever it brings us next. It's a beautiful thing!



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