

Alumnus Spurs Another Faculty First Implant program to feature new, innovative technology

Canada's First Nations populations currently suffer from many unmet oral health needs that significantly affect their quality of life. One common problem is a very high rate of tooth loss, resulting in the need for full dentures. Now, thanks to a gift of \$500,000 from dental implant industry leader, Dr. Gerald Niznick, the University of Manitoba will lead an innovative program that will see the potential for dramatic improvements to the oral health of First Nations communities across the country.

The Gerald Niznick First Nations Implant Dentistry program will see Manitoba's dental school take the lead in a national implant program that is planned to include three schools, with potential to expand further. This will position the Faculty of Dentistry as an international leader in the area of implant dentistry and will ensure that its graduating students are among the best prepared for patient care in this important developing area of dental practice.

"Dr. Niznick is known for his philanthropy in dentistry and implant dentistry in particular. However, this is a unique gift as it targets a critical unmet need for an underserved population and it will dramatically improve quality of life for these patients. We are thankful that Dr. Niznick has given our school the opportunity to participate in his community service vision," said Dean of Dentistry, Dr. Anthony Iacopino.

The problem with traditional complete lower dentures is that they are inherently unstable. Patients may experience difficulty in chewing function, leading to poor nutrition and overall health. Dr. Niznick first introduced the solution to this problem in 1982 and since that time, his treatment of placing 2 free-standing implants in the edentulous lower jaw for retention of an overdenture, has become the minimum recommended standard of care by the American College of Prosthodontists. Two years ago, **Dr. Niznick filed a patent on a new 1-piece implant, called GoDirect, that dramatically simplifies and reduces the cost for this life-changing procedure.**

This desire to innovate dental education led Dr. Niznick to partner with Manitoba's dental school to establish a novel program that will serve the dual purpose of improving the oral health and quality of life of First Nations populations in addition to demonstrating that implant overdentures should be part of conventional dental therapy available and affordable to all edentulous patients.

"I am pleased my implant innovations will serve such a worthy cause and proud that the University of Manitoba is taking a leading role in this project" said Dr. Niznick. "It will provide dental students and faculty with a rewarding experience that will positively influence dental implant therapy across Canada."

Dr. Niznick graduated from the Faculty of Dentistry in 1966 and received a Master's Degree in Prosthetics, the specialty of replacing missing teeth, from Indiana University in 1968. He has received an Honorary Doctorate degree from U. of M. in 2004, for his leadership in the field of implant dentistry, as evidenced by receiving 35 US Patents. He is one of the Faculty's most successful oral health entrepreneurs, having founded several implant companies over the last 30 years and is now President and CEO of Implant Direct Sybron Int'l. This success has allowed him to become one of the greatest

supporters of dental education, particularly in the field of implant dentistry, helping to foster innovation and excellence.

“This gift from Dr. Niznick will certainly bolster our ‘Drive for Top Five’ strategic plan and help us continue to develop one of our critical ‘Nine Pillars of Innovation’ within the area of education and training in implant dentistry,” said Dr. Iacopino. “It will be yet another demonstration that we have reached our goal of becoming one of the top five dental schools in North America.”

Thanks to Dr. Niznick and his vision for implant dentistry education, the Faculty of Dentistry, its students and the large First Nations population that is geographically close to us will benefit from new research, instruction and treatment in this exciting field.