

Rehabilitative Considerations for Dental Implants in the Diabetic Patient

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Abstract Diabetes is a serious illness that affects many people, and there are many new cases diagnosed every year in all populations around the world. Dental implant is one of the restorative methods to replace missing teeth. As implants are directly anchored into bones, they provide stability, a more natural appearance, and minimize the risk of bone resorption. Thus, today, there is a high demand of dental implants and it is inevitable to meet diabetics who request implant treatment. However, Diabetes mellitus patients may pose contraindications to dental implants because of microvascular complications leading to slower healing process after surgery. Studies have shown that dental implantation failure rate in diabetic patients is much higher than that in non-diabetic patients. This article reviews the effect of diabetes on the osseointegration of implants and the soft tissue healing. It presents the factors used in assessing the severity of diabetes and its complications, as well as considerations for rehabilitation planning in these patients. In addition, the role of antibiotic prophylaxis has been reviewed since its effect on wound

healing in diabetics is controversial. Integration of these factors by the dentist can dictate whether, as well as what type of implant supported prosthesis should be given to the diabetic patient.

Keywords Dental implants · Diabetes mellitus · Osseointegration · Implant prosthesis

Introduction

For a long time now, diabetes mellitus has been considered a relative contraindication for implant therapy because of increased susceptibility to infection, delayed wound healing and microvascular complications in such patients. Diabetic patients endure early and excessive loss of teeth caused by periodontitis and thus need implants more often than the general population. According to the World Health Organization, more than 180 million people worldwide are suffering from diabetes mellitus, one of the most common health problems in the world, while the number of diabetes sufferers is mounting to a double by 2030 [1, 2].

Diabetes mellitus is a chronic metabolic disease, which occurs when blood glucose concentration in body is in excess. This happens usually when the production of insulin, a hormone essential to regulate blood glucose level, from pancreas is inadequate (Type 1 diabetes), or when the body cannot effectively use the insulin it produces (Type 2 diabetes). Diabetes mellitus affects the blood circulations and is associated with many complications such as retinopathy, ischaemic heart disease, nephropathy, cerebrovascular disease, neuropathy and peripheral arterial diseases [3, 4]. But the most obviously apparent complication of diabetes happens to be periodontal disease which, in cases of uncontrolled diabetes, may eventually lead to

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tooth loss and total or partial edentulism [5–7]. Unfortunately, these Diabetics have always posed as a contraindication to dental implants [8].

Pathways of Oral Complications in the Diabetic Patient

Alteration in Bone Healing Mechanism

Chronic hyperglycaemia has been shown to be a stimulus for bone resorption. Bone loss in diabetes does not seem to depend so much on an increase in osteoclastogenesis as in the reduction in bone formation [9]. Hyperglycaemia inhibits osteoblastic differentiation and alters the response of the parathyroid hormone that regulates the metabolism of phosphorus and calcium [10]. In addition, it produces a deleterious effect on the bone matrix and its components and also affects adherence, growth and accumulation of extra-cellular matrix [11]. Mineral homeostasis, production of osteoid and, in short, bone formation has been shown to be clearly diminished in various experimental models of diabetes [12] (Fig. 1).

Oxidative Stress Phenomenon

This phenomenon refers to a condition when hyperglycemia triggers an imbalance between production of reactive oxygen species and antioxidants, leading to tissue breakdown. Reactive oxygen species like superoxide anions, hydroxyl radicals and peroxy radicals destroy many biologic molecules like DNA, lipids and proteins, leading to cell death [13–18].

Diabetes-Periodontitis Inter-Relationship

The degree of glycemic control is an important variable in the relationship between diabetes and periodontal diseases,

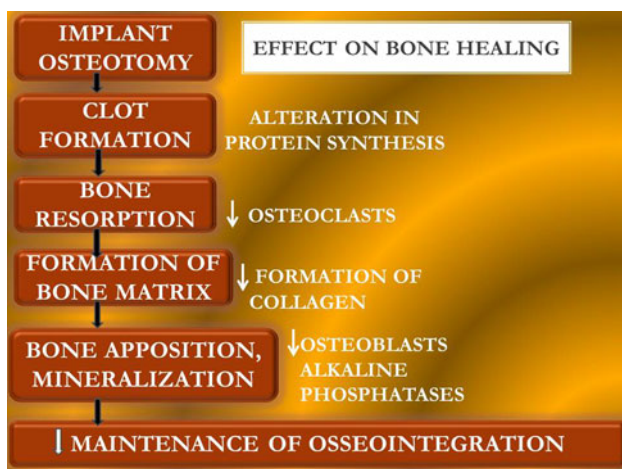


Fig. 1 Alteration in bone healing in diabetic patients

with higher prevalence and severity of gingival inflammation and periodontal destruction being seen in those with poor glycemic control [19–24]. There are few differences in the subgingival microbiota between diabetic and non-diabetic patients with periodontitis, suggesting that alterations in the host immunoinflammatory response to the potential pathogens may play a prominent role [25, 26]. Diabetes may result in impairment of neutrophil adherence, chemotaxis and phagocytosis, which may facilitate bacterial persistence in the periodontal pocket and significantly increase periodontal destruction [27, 28]. While neutrophils are often hypofunctional in diabetes, these patients may have a hyper-responsive monocyte/macrophage phenotype, resulting in increased production of pro-inflammatory cytokines and mediators [29, 30]. This occurs due to the reaction between the advanced glycation end products (AGE) and their receptors (RAGE) on target cells such as macrophages. Production of matrix metalloproteinases such as collagenase increases in many diabetic patients, resulting in altered collagen homeostasis and wound healing within the periodontium [31]. On the other hand, studies have shown that diabetic patients with periodontal infection have a greater risk of worsening glycemic control over time as compared to diabetics without periodontitis [32]. Periodontal infection can induce elevated serum levels of interleukin-6 and tumour necrosis factor- α levels, and may play a similar role in obesity in inducing or exacerbating insulin resistance [33].

Thus it can be said that diabetes and periodontitis are difficult to separate and the co-occurrence of these two diseases is a serious consideration for dental implant specialists (Fig. 2).

Effect on Osseointegration

It has been shown that, although the amount of bone formed is similar when comparing diabetes induced

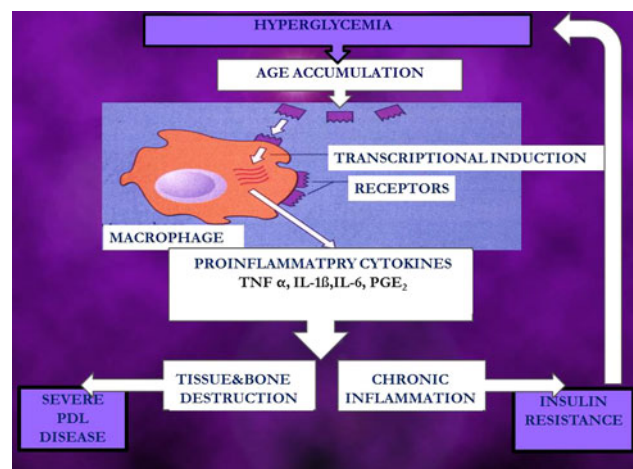


Fig. 2 Linkage between diabetes and periodontal disease severity

animals with controls, there is a reduction in the bone implant contact in diabetics [34, 35]. This confirms that diabetes inhibits osseointegration and this situation may be reversed by treating the hypoglycemia and maintaining near-normal glucose levels [36].

Survival Rate of Implants in Patients with Diabetes Mellitus

Diabetes is currently classified as a relative contraindication for implant treatment. Compared with the general population, a higher failure rate has been seen in patients with adequate metabolic control [37]. Reviewing the literature published in the last 10 years, the survival rate for implants in diabetic patients ranges between 88.8 and 97.3 % 1 year after placement, and 85.6–94.6 % in functional terms 1 year after the prosthesis was inserted [38]. In a retrospective study [39] with 215 implants placed in 40 diabetic patients, 31 failed implants were recorded, 24 of which (11.2 %) occurred in the first year of functional loading. This analysis shows a survival rate of 85.6 % after 6.5 years of functional use. Another study [40] carried out with 227 implants placed in 34 patients shows a success rate of 94.3 % at the time of the second surgery, prior to the insertion of the prosthesis [40]. In a meta-analysis [41] with two implant systems placed in edentulous jaws, failure rates of 3.2 % were obtained in the initial stages, whereas in the later stages, this figure increases to 5.4 %. A prospective study [42] with 89 well controlled type 2 diabetics in whose jaws a total of 178 implants had been placed reveals early failure rates of 2.2 % (four failures) increasing to 7.3 % (nine further failures) 1 year after placement, indicating a survival rate of 92.7 % within the first year of functional loading. The 5 year survival rate was 90 % [42].

The fact that most failures occur after the second phase of surgery and during the first year of functional loading might indicate microvascular involvement is one of the factor implicated in implant failures in diabetic patients [43, 44]. The percentage of failures in these studies is shown graphically in Fig. 3. The left axis shows time elapsed since placement of implants. The right hand axis reflects the different phases from placement of implants till 1 year of functional loading after the prosthesis placement. The numbers in the columns indicate the percentages of failures in two distinct stages for each study. Early failures include up to 1 year of functional loading. Late failures have been monitored for up to 5 years. Most articles conclude that, despite the high risk of failure in diabetic patients, maintaining adequate blood glucose levels along with other measures improves implant survival rate in these patients [38, 43].

Ayson et al. [45] in an evidence based review (Table 1) [46–51] concluded that there is insufficient evidence that

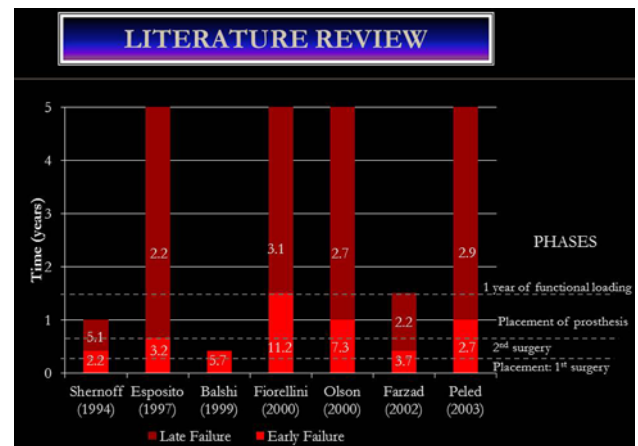


Fig. 3 Graph of percentage of failures in diabetic patients

well controlled diabetes type II is a significant risk factor on its own for implant failure. The study with the largest numbers [46] found no significant difference; however, the number of people with diabetes was not reported so it is not possible to estimate the power of the study to detect a difference. The systematic review by Klokkevold [49] on the other hand, found an absolute difference in survival of 1.5 % between those people with diabetes type II and those without (Table 1).

Which Diabetic Patient is Suitable for Implant Placement

It is estimated that in India, as many as 50 % of the people with type 2 diabetes mellitus are undiagnosed every year [52]. To increase cost effectiveness, the Expert Committee on the Diagnosis and Classification of Diabetes Mellitus recommends testing in high risk populations (Table 2) [53, 54]. Early detection and treatment might well reduce the type 2 diabetes related disease burdens such as periodontitis [55].

Disease Severity

Once the patient is confirmed to have diabetes, it is important to assess the severity of the disease. Type 1 diabetes is often characterized by severe systemic complications because of its early onset and difficult control. In this type of disease one must be extremely cautious when using dental implants [42].

Disease Duration and Treatment Regime

Disease duration is another important factor [42]. Longer duration allows more damage to accumulate systemically, in relation to the degree to which the disease has been controlled. Disease severity can also be reflected by the regimen

Table 1 Effect of diabetes on dental implant failure [24, 46–51]

Reference	Description	Numbers		Key results
		People	Implants	
Alsaadi et al. [46]	Dental implant (Brånemark system®) survival and factors related to risk of early* failure. University setting *early = before or up to abutment connection	2,004	6,946	No significant difference in risk of early failure in people with diabetes type II.
Alsaadi et al. [47]	Dental implant (MkII TiUnite™) survival and factors related to early* failure. University setting *early = before or up to abutment connection	238	720	Significantly increased failure rate in people with type I diabetes (100 %*) compared to 1.81 % failed in people without diabetes type I; $p = 0.02$ *only one implant and it failed. No significant difference in implant failures in people with type II diabetes; $p = 0.39/0.36$
Alvim-Pereira et al. [48]	Relationship between vitamin D receptor gene polymorphism and other clinical factors with dental implant failure. NEODENT™ implants University setting	217	1,376	6.6 % of 'no failure' group had diabetes compared to 1.3 % in 'failure' group ($p = 0.096$).
Klokkevold et al. [49]	Systematic review of the effect of smoking, diabetes and periodontitis on the survival or success of dental implants ($N = 14$ studies)	1,150	10,904	Diabetes: type II only survival (4 studies) Diabetics = 91.7 % (95 %CI: 89.1–94.3 %). Non-diabetics = 93.2 % (95 %CI: 92.2–94.1 %). Pooled estimate of the difference in survival rates not possible to calculate because only one study included both diabetic and non-diabetic patients. Implant success not reported in any of the studies.
Kourtis et al. [50]	Associate the causes of dental implant failure with some potential risk factors. Various implant brands. Private dental clinics (4).	405	1,692	"No statistical significance was noted among failures in people with diabetes".
Moy et al. [73]	Risk factors for implant failure. Various dental implant brands. University setting.	1,140	4,680	People with diabetes have an increased chance of implant failure: $R = 1.94$, $p = 0.003$
Mundt et al. [51]	Potential risk factors for implant failure. Tiiox dental implants. Private practice.	159	663	Reported that 'diseases' were not significantly correlated with implant failure ('diseases' included: cardiovascular diseases, allergies, blood clotting disorders, diabetes, hepatitis, tuberculosis, HIV, thyroid diseases, osteoporosis, arthritis/arthrosis, and rheumatism).

needed to control one's disease. Diabetic patients requiring insulin usually have a more advanced disease and will probably experience the most disease complications [56].

Glycemic Control

HbA_{1c} (glycosylated hemoglobin) can reflect the glucose levels in the blood over the previous 6–12 weeks prior to the test. It is expressed as a percentage of the total hemoglobin. For healthy, non-diabetic adults, the normal range is 4–8 % [57]. The HbA_{1c} allows assessment of intermediate term balance of diabetes, and the feasibility of implant supported rehabilitation should therefore be evaluated with past test results. In addition to assessing the HbA_{1c}, daily plasma glucose levels should be monitored

near the time of implantation to rule out short term glucose imbalance that was not represented by it [58, 59].

Target Organ Involvement

Systemic complications are a good measure of diabetes disease severity. Diabetes attacks organs such as retina, kidneys, heart, brain etc. in the form of micro and macrovascular complications. The involvement of target organs depends on the duration of the disease and the level of its control over that time. Thus it is logical that target organ involvement will correlate with dental implant failure rates. Furthermore, a history of delayed wound healing should be sought. Previous surgical operations including dental and oral procedures are a good measure for this [56].

Table 2 Criteria for testing for type 2 DM in asymptomatic, undiagnosed individuals [45, 46]

Age >45, particularly in those who are overweight (BMI > 25 kg/m ²)
Age <45, particularly in those who are overweight (BMI > 25 kg/m ²) and have additional risk factors
a. First degree relatives with DM
b. Sedentary lifestyle
c. High risk ethnic groups: African Americans, Hispanic Americans, Native Americans, Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders.
d. Delivered a baby weighing >9 lb or have been diagnosed with gestational diabetes.
e. Hypertension (BP > 140/90 mm)
f. HDL <35 mg/dl
g. History of impaired fasting glucose or impaired glucose tolerance on previous testing.
h. History of vascular disease.

Treatment Strategies for Placing Dental Implants in Diabetic Patients

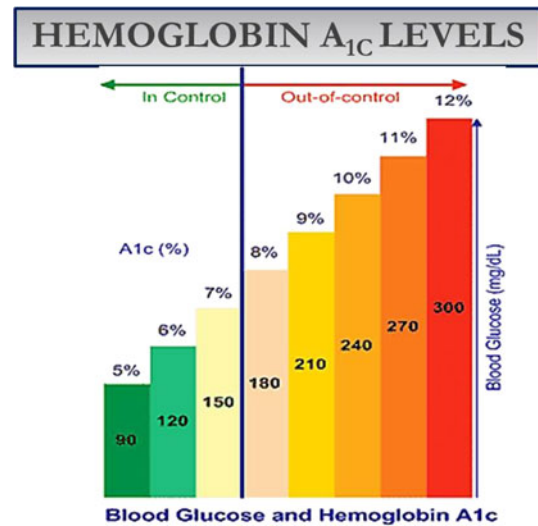
The physiological events associated with the “stress” of a procedure can affect both diabetic control and cardiac function. Consequently, the clinician treating a patient with diabetes mellitus must develop treatment strategies that take into consideration the patient’s overall health and, in particular, the patient’s cardiovascular status [60, 61].

Medical Consultation

In general, patients with good glycemic control can be managed as normal patients. It is recommended that elective treatment be deferred if the fasting blood glucose level is either <70 mg/dL or more than 200 mg/dL or when the HbA1c level is in excess of 7 %. This recommendation is based on evidence that patients with a blood glucose level of <70 mg/dL are high-risk candidates for hypoglycemic events, and that a blood glucose level of more than 200 mg/dL or an HbA1c level in excess of 7 % is indicative of poor glycemic control, and that the patients are likely to have or are developing significant microvascular and/or macrovascular disease (Fig. 4). Medical consultation is further required if the anticipated dental therapy may adversely impact good glycemic control [58, 59, 62–65].

The Timing and Length of Appointments

Patients should preferentially be treated in the morning with short appointment durations, after having taken their normal insulin or oral hypoglycemic agent and after having eaten a normal breakfast. This timing of the appointment will place the patient in the oral health care setting before the peak activity of

**Fig. 4** Blood glucose and hemoglobin A_{1c} levels

the therapeutic agents is reached (i.e., a time of high glucose and low-insulin or oral hypoglycemic agent activity) [57].

The Use of Local Anesthetic Agents

When indicated, the local anesthesia may be supplemented with an oral benzodiazepine, nitrous oxide, or intravenous sedation. If nitrous oxide is used, the clinician should ensure adequate oxygenation (35 % nitrogen dioxide/65 % dioxygen) to avert rebound hypertension secondary to hypoxia. Issues related to the use of vasoconstrictors in local anesthetic agents, with special reference to patients with cardiovascular diseases, were extensively reviewed in recent publications [60, 61]. In patients with DM, the presence of cardiovascular risk factors in association with dental procedures and the functional capacity of the patient should be the critical determinants for the safe use of a vasoconstrictor.

The use of Antibacterial Agents

The reciprocal relationship between infection and poor glycemic control has led some to advocate the administration of antimicrobial prophylaxis prior to dental therapy, particularly in the patients with poorly controlled diabetes [66, 67]. When a patient with DM presents with significant infection, his or her primary physician should be consulted promptly, as the patient’s therapeutic regimen may have to be adjusted to ensure adequate glycemic control. In addition, the patient must be instructed to practice meticulous oral hygiene, and should be recalled at regular intervals to monitor resolution of the infection and compliance with recommended preventive measures [57, 68, 69] (Table 3).

An informal survey of surgeons performing dental implant surgery indicates that the majority administrate the

Table 3 Antibiotic prophylaxis for dental implant surgery [60, 61]

A. Intraoral application	
Penicillin G, 1–2 million U IV q2h	
Penicillin V, 2 g po q2h	
Clindamycin, 300 mg po IV q6h	
B. Intraoral application: nasal or chronic sinus involvement	
Amoxicillin/clavulanic acid, 500 mg po q4h	
Ampocillin/sulbactam 2g1g IV/IM q3h	
Clindamycin, 300 mg po IV q6h	
Cephalexin, 500 mg po q4h	
Cefazolin, 1 g IV/IM q4h	
C. Bone-grafted or extraoral application	
Same as above	

antibiotic for 5–7 days postoperatively. A review and study of antibiotic prophylaxis for oral and maxillofacial surgery support the view that there is no significant reduction of postoperative wound infections when administering antibiotics for more than 1 day after surgery [68, 69].

In addition to antibiotic prophylaxis, the use of 0.12 % chlorhexidine mouthwash has shown a clear benefit by reducing the failure rates from 13.5 to 4.4 % in type 2 diabetics, during a follow-up period of 36 months. This same study observed a reduction of 10.5 % in the failure rate when antibiotics were administered pre-operatively [37, 56].

Postoperative Pain Management

Treatment strategies should also include effective postoperative pain management. Opioid-based analgesics effectively block pain and tend to contribute to cardiovascular stability [70]. Possible increased hypoglycemic effect with large doses of salicylates has been reported in patients on insulin, and increased hypoglycemia with large doses of salicylates has been reported in combination with chlorpropamide, a sulfonyleurea. However, usual therapeutic doses of acetylsalicylic acid (ASA) have little effect [71]. These potential drug interactions, are not an absolute contraindication to the use of an opioid/ASA formulation for pain management in the dental setting, but rather they are another indication to monitor plasma glucose levels in the post-operative period. Indeed, since many patients with DM are taking ASA as primary or secondary therapy to prevent cardiovascular events, an opioid/ASA formulation is more appropriate than an opioid/ibuprofen formulation, which may interfere with the antiplatelet effect of ASA [72].

Implant Location

Implant success in the general population is dependent on implant location in the jaws and should be even more so in diabetic patients. Success rates are higher in the

mandibular jaw and are improved when the implants are anteriorly located. The best location for implants, yielding the greatest success rate, is the symphysis area of the mandible [46, 47, 73].

Implant Selection

The same basic principles of osseointegration by Albrektsson et al. [74] apply to the diabetic patient as well. Screw shaped design, surface roughness of implant, surface purity of implant are all factors that help to achieve a better osseointegration.

Hydroxyapatite plasma-spray-coated implants have been found to have a higher survival rate than titanium implants in type 2 diabetic patients, i.e., 97.9 versus 84.7 % after 36 months [37]. This is noteworthy, since hydroxyapatite (HA) plasma-spray-coated implants are more susceptible to failure through microbial contamination, dissolution, and fracture of the HA from the titanium surface [75].

Position, Number and Length of Implant Fixtures

The most important principle is to achieve good initial stability and full coverage of the fixtures in well-vascularized, highly osteogenic bone. Bio-cortical initial stabilization should be the goal. If this is not possible, one must resort to at least monocortical fixation. For adequate load distribution to the bone and fixtures themselves, the latter should be spread well apart and placed along a curve or any arrangement other than a straight line [76]. The anterior loop of the mandibular canal and the nasopalatine duct should be avoided so as not to interfere with nerve function and osseointegration. The available bone volume in different areas can be reasonably well assessed preoperatively by palpation and, especially, by tomographic radiographs. For oral purposes, one fixture can carry one crown only, two fixtures provide minimal support for a bridge in partial edentulism, and four fixtures are the minimum for a full-arch bridge, provided they are spaced well apart along a curve. The lengths of the fixtures should be determined only after all high-speed drilling has been finished. In particular, marginal countersinking may reduce the depth of fixture site, then fixture shorter than originally anticipated must be chosen [77].

Surgical Protocol

For the diabetic patients, atraumatic tissue handling is very critical [78]

Handling of the Covering Soft Tissues

The leading surgical principle of the osseointegration method has always been the minimize trauma to the host

tissues. Incisions should be placed to reduced interference with vascularization and in areas where there is little frictional (denture) load. A crestal incision is usually preferred.

Handling of the Bone Tissue

All aspects of the process of drilling in bone should be carefully scrutinized to avoid frictional heat, and strict recommendations have been published [79]. Clinical studies in dense mandibular bone have confirmed that if these recommendations are followed, the frictional heat at the threshold level is 47 °C for 1 min [80]. Frictional heat above this level will prevent osseointegration from taking place.

Matching the Fixture to Its Bone Site

Matching the fixture to the prepared bone site should be performed with the aim of avoiding over tightening yet creating an optimal fit. Over tightening is likely to cause marginal compression ischemia, which may result in inadvertent loss of marginal bone height [81]. Finally, very loosely textured bone may create a risky situation, because even with correctly performed surgery, only a few trabeculae touch the fixture surface to provide the initial stability.

Abutment Considerations

Choice of Abutment

The longest possible abutments with regard to esthetics should be chosen to facilitate access to the periabutment area for hygiene purpose [76].

Managing Periabutment Soft Tissues

Abutments should penetrate through attached gingiva or immobile oral mucosa or skin. For oral purposes, attached gingiva may be strictly necessary only on the lingual aspect of mandibular abutments to protect the vulnerable mucosa in the floor of the mouth from frictional movements against the abutments or from excessive hygiene efforts. However, a prerequisite for healthy marginal soft tissue is always good oral hygiene and no exposed fixture threads. If stabilization of oral periabutment mucosa is needed, conventional sulco-plastics or mucosal grafts are recommended after the prosthesis is finished so that additional stabilization of healing marginal tissues can be obtained by a surgical pack [76].

Type of Implant Loading

Bone quality at the implant site also impacts the chances for osseointegration. Bone remodeling around the implants

is lower and less effective in diabetic patients [37]. Since patients with diabetes have slow rate of bone remodeling, it is customary to delay implant exposure by 4–8 weeks after what is acceptable for the general population. For this reason, immediate loading of implants should be avoided in diabetic patients [56]. Conversely, according to a study by Balshi et al. [82], despite the metabolic differences seen in diabetic patients, an immediate loading protocol can be successful and result in osseointegration.

Conclusion

The factors used in assessing the severity of diabetes and its complications, as well as the considerations for rehabilitation planning in these patients have been presented. Integration of these factors by the clinician dictates whether as well as what type of implant supported restoration should be performed. Although there is a higher risk of failure in diabetic patients, experimental studies have shown that the optimization of glycaemic control improves the degree of osseointegration in the implants. Nonetheless, it is necessary to extend the number of prospective studies in humans in order to clarify the true impact of diabetes on the prognosis for osseointegration.

- (1) Good glycaemic control: HbA1c <7 % baseline and pre-prandial glycaemia (mg/dL): 80–110 maximum post-prandial level of glycaemia (mg/dL): <180.
- (2) Pre-operative antibiotic therapy.
- (3) 0.12 % Chlorhexidine mouthwash.

Sources of Support in the Form of Grants None.

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