American Academy of Maxillofacial Prosthetics
73rd Annual Meeting: November 7-10, 2026
Swissôtel - Chicago, IL

Program Speaker – Lawrence E. Brecht

Title
The Cleft Palate Patient – The New "Forgotten Patient"?

Abstract
In 1974, Curtis and Cantor, in a classic article, described "The Forgotten Patient in Maxillofacial Prosthetics"1 in referring to the patient who had undergone a radical resection of the mandible. A year later, Ian Taylor, also in a classic article, in elucidating the technique to transfer the fibula free flap for microvascular reconstruction helped to improve the problem of that "Forgotten Patient". Today, Taylor's paradigm shifting research serves as the foundation for much of the work we do as maxillofacial prosthodontists.

But as maxillofacial prosthodontists, we are called to be experts in rehabilitating patients that may suffer from one of the triad of conditions we are trained to care for. One might say that the new "Forgotten Patient" in maxillofacial prosthodontics is the someone who has a cleft of the lip, alveolus and palate, or simply "the cleft palate patient". As a result, these patients, who present with a unique set of problems and complex histories, are often cared for by general dentists or prosthodontists unaware of the long-term treatment perspective needed to properly manage the cleft patient over a lifetime.

This presentation will address the current rehabilitation modalities employed in treating the cleft patient from birth through adulthood. Particular emphasis will be given to the early management of the cleft for the neonate and how such early intervention may have a drastic impact on the burden of care and quality of life as the patient ages. The controversies surrounding NAM and PLANA will be addressed. Treatment of the adult cleft patient will also be presented.

Learning Objectives:

At the conclusion of this presentation participants will be able to or will have gained an understanding of:

- The unique orofacial problem set of the patient with a cleft.
- The benefits of an integrated team approach for addressing these problems in the cleft palate patient.
- The role presurgical infant orthopedics (PSIO), specifically nasoalveolar molding (NAM) and presurgical lip, alveolus and nose alignment (PLANA) play in early cleft management.

- The unique treatment planning needs of patients with a cleft, including how the cleft situation might impact the use of dental implants for these patients.

Biography

Dr. Brecht is currently the Director of Maxillofacial Prosthetics at Northwell Health System, the largest hospital system in New York State. In addition, he serves as the Director of Maxillofacial Prosthetics in the Postgraduate Prosthodontic Program of NYU College of Dentistry where he is an Associate Clinical Professor of Prosthodontics. Dr. Brecht also has the privilege of an appointment in the Department of Head & Neck Surgery at MD Anderson Cancer Center of The University of Texas.

Prior to its dissolution in 2015, for over 25 years, Dr. Brecht was the Director of Dental Services at the Institute of Reconstructive Plastic Surgery at NYU Langone Medical Center with appointments at NYU School of Medicine in the Department of Plastic Surgery and the Department of Otolaryngology/Head & Neck Surgery.

Dr. Brecht maintains a private practice in Manhattan limited to Maxillofacial Prosthetics and Prosthodontics.

He has authored numerous articles and book chapters on the maxillofacial reconstruction and oral rehabilitation of patients with cancer or craniofacial anomalies. He is part of the team that developed the ”Jaw-in-a-Day” (JIAD) technique for immediate reconstruction of the maxilla or mandible. He was also part of the team that developed nasoalveolar molding (NAM) for the care of infants with a cleft. He is a past-president of the Greater New York Academy of Prosthodontics and the American Academy of Maxillofacial Prosthetics (AAMP). He is also a Fellow of the Academy of Prosthodontics as well as the ITI (USA). In addition, Dr. Brecht has received numerous awards, most notably the Andrew J. Ackerman Award from the AAMP for outstanding contributions to the field of maxillofacial prosthetics. He co-authored the textbook, “The Immediacy Concept” published in 2022 by Quintessence. He lectures regularly both nationally and internationally on the topics of immediate reconstruction throughout the oral cavity and maxillofacial region.

Dr. Brecht also has the privilege of serving as the president of The Maxillofacial Foundation as well as the NextGenFace Foundation.