

Driving Innovation in Implants

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Many times since the birth of Dentistry, great innovations have been created by practicing dentists. Dr. David D'Alise is one of those dentists. In 1973, he identified a void of choices for an implant supported overdenture and he invented a solution. The O Company was born and continues to develop with an ever expanding line of products. The newest line is an implant designed for immediate loading. Recently, I had the opportunity to interview the key executives of OCO Biomedical.

An interview with:
Dr. David D'Alise,
President & Founder
(DD); John Holt,
Chief Operating Officer
(JH) and Larry Vetter,
Vice President Sales &
Manufacturing (LV)

*Pictured at left:
John Holt, Chief
Operating Officer
Dr. David D'Alise,
President & Founder
and Larry Vetter,
Vice President Sales
& Manufacturing*

DT: Dr. D'Alise, how did you make the transition from dentist to OCO company founder, in 1973?

DD: While practicing in 1973, I recognized the growing need for a better designed retrievable fixed attachment system due to the common complaints across our profession of the lack of rigidity in retrievable over dentures. To solve this problem, I developed and patented the "O" Ring attachment system that has been recognized as the most user-friendly and cost-efficient attachment system available. Over time, the "O" Ring attachment system has proven to be the system of choice industry wide verified by the number of "copy cat" systems now in existence.

DT: Why did you choose the name OCO?

JH: "OCO" is an abbreviated version of the original company name, The "O" Company. The name refers to the originally designed and patented "O" ring attachment over denture. In 2005, we changed the name of the company to OCO Biomedical to better reflect the changing product mix the company was developing, manufacturing and distributing, including the new one-and two-piece immediate-load dental implant systems.

DT: Dr. D'Alise, how do you divide your time between research, company operation and clinical dentistry?

DD: I spend most of my time these days developing and refining our ever growing product mix — especially new implants and attachment systems. I continue to see a limited number of patients one or two days a week. Most of these patients are people I have known for many years and I look forward to speaking with them. I enjoy the hands-on work and it allows me the opportunity to use our products on actual patients and make refinements to our implants and attachment systems as necessary.

DT: The implant market continues to grow as new companies and products appear. What makes OCO Biomedical a unique player?

JH: OCO Biomedical is a fully-integrated company that can quickly respond to the demanding needs of a fast-changing marketplace with unique and dependable dental attachment products. By being "fully-integrated" with our own research and development capabilities, as well as our own production facilities located in Albuquerque, NM, we can better shorten the lead time for new product development and get our products to market much faster. We can also quickly handle special requests we receive from the users of our products.

In addition, since we were founded by a practicing dentist, we have a special feel for the needs of today's dentist who is seeking to add dependable and profitable procedures to his/her practice. We created the simple one and two-piece immediate load "dual-stabilization" implant systems with the general dentist's needs in mind.

DT: Many companies offer similar products in their implant lines (minis, wide diameter, coated, etc.). How will implant companies differentiate themselves from their competition, beyond the development of new products? What forms of customer support are available? (Ex.: telephone, Web, sales force, etc.)

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JH: We have found that one of our best competitive advantages is our ability to personally interact with a dentist as s/he begins to place implants. By design, OCO Biomedical created an economical and user-friendly implant system that allows dentists to perform implant and attachment procedures using less instrumentation and thereby incurring less startup cost. Our experience also has shown us more than 90% of the orders that we receive require some type of personal interaction between a dentist and our customer service team when the dentist places an order. We pride ourselves on our ability to provide the highest level of customer service possible and are available to answer any questions that may arise.

OCO Biomedical is somewhat unique as a company, since we are completely vertically integrated. By that I mean we manufacture our own products and sell directly to the dental professional. Our sales and customer service departments have developed close relationships with our customers and are available to talk with a doctor one-on-one. This provides a doctor with a superior level of support s/he has come to appreciate, especially when s/he is faced with a special case that requires a consultation. Our new Web site allows a doctor to view our complete product line and place an order 24 hours a day, seven days a week. We implemented this availability at the request of our dentists, since they are busy with patients most of the day and don't have time to review their product needs and place an order until after hours.

Our Web site also offers demonstrations of implant and restorative procedures that can be used to help educate the doctor's staff and/or a patient, if required.

DT: Describe your manufacturing facility. Where is it located? How many people work there? Describe the process from raw materials to finished components.

LV: OCO Biomedical's manufacturing facility is conveniently located near our headquarters in Albuquerque, NM. The facility includes state-of-the-art Citizen Swiss Screw machines, as well as a variety of other manufacturing, testing and finishing equipment. OCO Biomedical purchases and utilizes only commercially pure grade-4 titanium for all of our implants.

DT: Is there a training program available to new OCO Biomedical customers? Where do you do the training?

JH: We provide implant training in ways that best meets the needs of our dentists. We often travel to a specific region where a group of dentists have requested a hands-on implantation seminar from Dr. D'Alise. In some cases, we will even have a dentist fly to Albuquerque for a one-on-one session with Dr. D'Alise in our office operatory. We are now seeing an increase in the number of requests for training and information on our patented immediate-load implant systems from international dentist and professional groups. This year, Dr. D'Alise is planning on conducting educational seminars in the Middle East and in Central America, as well as other international destinations as his time permits.

To add even more hands-on support and training for interested dentists, we have just launched our OCO Biomedical Mentor Program. This outreach effort was created to help facilitate additional educational opportunities with selected dentists who currently use OCO Biomedical products and other dentists who are interested in learning more about implants and the OCO Biomedical system from one of their peers.

DT: What is the focus of your current product development? How often do you release new products on the market?

JH: We continue to focus on developing leading-edge implant and attachment systems that are simple to use and provide the highest level of patient satisfaction. As the market for implants continues to grow, we want to offer products that are easy for the dentist to use with confidence and dependability.

DT: The buzz words of implant dentistry are "immediate loading." How is your Immediate Stabilizing Implant (ISI) different from other implants in your catalog?

LV: We carefully engineered and designed our ISI and Taper Screw Implant (TSI) one- and two-piece implant systems from the start to be immediate-load products. Many of the products on the market today were re-engineered to accept an immediate load. OCO Biomedical's implants were the first to utilize a patented "dual stabilization" locking system that actually "locks" the implant in place to provide a true mechanical lock for immediate load.



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***John Holt, President, Chief Operating Officer
OCO Biomedical Inc.***

DT: What is your most popular category of implants? Why?

LV: The ISI and TSI immediate-load implants are our fastest growing products. This is due to two major reasons. First, our immediate load system is easy to learn and less expensive than other systems currently on the market for a dentist to use. Second, it offers a dentist a product that is unsurpassed in quality and consistency and allows s/he, in most cases, to get a patient in and out of the dentist's office with an implant and temporary crown in an hour or less.

DT: What are the three biggest challenges for your company moving forward? How will you address these challenges?

JH: As a small but growing company in a very large market, we will need to continue to focus on new product development, dentist education and getting in front of as many new dentists as we can especially with our easy-to-use immediate-load implants. OCO Biomedical has a very well-kept secret in the industry for many years and we have a very large and dedicated group of dentists who wouldn't think of using any other company's products. As we continue to grow, we will need to educate new dentists on our unique and easy-to-use products as well as continue to deliver the kind of new products plus the high-level customer service our current dentists have come to expect.

DT: How would you like OCO Biomedical to be positioned in five years?

JH: I would hope to see more and more doctors, especially general practitioners, confidently placing implants in the next five years. With the OCO Biomedical system, there is no easier way for a doctor to provide the best products and services for her/his patient and yet—develop a more challenging and financially rewarding addition to his/her practice.

DT: If I asked one of your customers to share the reasons why they purchase your products, what would they say?

LV: Our products are extremely user-friendly and provide a dentist with an affordable implant and attachment system that they and their patients can depend on. In addition, we have an outstanding team at OCO Biomedical. All departments, from customer service, engineering, sales and finance to our product development team, are dedicated to providing our dentists with the highest level of customer service and the best products on the market.

DT: Describe your relationship with the community on Dentaltown.com. How does this community fit with your plans for the future?

DD: We strongly believe more dentists should consider placing implants as part of their patient offerings. Many of the implant companies today have tried to complicate the procedure, and some dentists are reticent to attempt to add this procedure to their practice. We have purposely created and designed a system that is simple to perform, relatively inexpensive to a dentist to start these procedures, provides a high level of success and great patient satisfaction. All things the Dentaltown community should be ready to embrace.

DT: Dr. D'Alise, tell me something about OCO Biomedical we haven't covered in the interview.

DD: In my spare time, I love to tinker with bikes, boats and even cars once in awhile. It's been something I have been doing since I was a kid in Chicago, where my first job was working in a Harley-Davidson shop. The combination of my love of dentistry, my interest in implants and how they can provide a better dental experience for a patient and my mechanical ability are probably what got me interested in creating the "O" Ring dental attachment system in the first place.

DT: There is no doubt that implant dentistry has become a mandatory part of dental practice. OCO Biomedical is clearly able to offer a unique line of products for many restorative needs. You can be proud when you place these fixtures, since they are made in the USA.



4.0 TSI
2-piece implant

4.0 ISI 1-piece
implant with "O"
ball for overdentures

4.0 ISI-1-piece
implant for Crown
and Bridge

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***Dr. David D'Alise, President & Founder,
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