

A RESTATEMENT OF THE MYOFUNCTIONAL CONCEPT IN ORTHODONTICS

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MY ORIGINAL decision to devote my thinking to the value of nutrition and muscular function as it applies to orthodontics has never ceased to fill me with enthusiasm because the laws of human reasoning with which I started many years ago seemed to coincide with the natural laws governing growth and development. The fact that we are able to gain insight into the mechanisms of nature through observation and research makes the quest of these laws appear to me as one of the most important scientific pursuits of life. In my endeavor to clarify my thesis I have tried to express this hypothesis in a manner that I considered to be simple and easy of comprehension; but thus far I fear that I have failed to make a very deep and lasting impression upon many of our profession. It is because of this that I appear once more before you to make one more endeavor to stress the value of myofunctional treatment, not alone because of the satisfaction its intelligent application can bring to the orthodontist, but to the many benefits it can bring to the growing child.

In undertaking a re-evaluation of myofunctional therapy in orthodontic practice, it might be of advantage to attempt a brief general review of some of the nonmechanical requirements in a comprehensive understanding of the practice of orthodontics. Of course, it should be understood that a task such as this can be dwelt with but briefly in one short paper. For some it needs but a suggestion to start the mind toward creative and constructive thinking. It is from such minds that I hope to evoke on this occasion a response to a deeper consideration of all things basic in relation to child growth and development, as it touches oral and facial maturation.

At the outset let me say that I think there is a great deal more to orthodontics than mechanics, as valuable as they have proved to be. However, I deplore the facility of the drift, which is apparent after graduation, to the mere mechanical phase of practice, sometimes almost to the total exclusion of the basic. The truth often lies not hidden but finally available to the one who is persistent in his research. The practitioner who depends upon research is always in an important position, for he must continually weigh the merits of the material placed before him by research men and other writers. He it is who must be equipped to judge, and the wisdom of his decisions depends upon the employment of his basic knowledge and his ability to think by the scientific method, instead of building up arbitrary justification for unscientific practices. Such scientific method gives the surest guarantee that as a profession we shall become more and more essential to the well-being of mankind.

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