
A tribute to Dr. Per-Ingvar Brånemark

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On December 20th of this year, we lost one of the greatest innovators in dental science. Although Dr. Per-Ingvar Brånemark was not a dentist but an orthopedic surgeon, his contribution to dental implantology is never to be forgotten.

As is well known, while performing orthopedic experiments on rabbit legs in 1952, Dr. Brånemark serendipitously discovered that titanium fuses well with bone. What made it possible for him to grasp this new concept, which he later named "osseointegration," was his thoroughness in considering every factor in his studies, which most researchers could have easily overlooked under the same circumstances.

Nevertheless, Dr. Brånemark's ongoing research on osseointegration was not well accepted at first because the mainstream of medical knowledge worked with the assumption that the human body is inhospitable to any kind of foreign material and that it often reacts with inflammation. Not surprisingly, the grant applications for his studies on bone-anchored implants were frequently rejected, which still did not stop him from pursuing his passion. At last, he succeeded in winning funding from the United States National Institutes of Health, and Brånemark implants have served as the basis for the field of dental implantology ever since they first expanded the application of osseointegration to dentistry in the 1970s. At the Toronto Osseointegration Conference in 1982, the new technology of machined titanium implants was introduced to all dental communities. After that, more extensive application in clinical settings was possible.

Even though Dr. Brånemark was not a dentist, he still deserves the greatest respect from researchers in every biomedical field including dentistry, given his tremendous accomplishments of exploring the therapeutic effectiveness of implants and presenting the remarkable treatment modality to dental science. Titanium implants, which were the products of his impressive research performance, boosted by the discovery of osseointegration, have become widely used in dentistry, as well as in general and veterinary medicine.

Although we must say farewell to you, Dr. Brånemark, we know that you and your legacy will always stay with us.

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