





*A Tribute to the Life of*  
**Dr. Carl E. Misch**  
**(1947-2017)**



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The world constantly teaches us lessons along the path of life, and one of its most bittersweet truths becomes apparent when we are put in the presence of a genius. Certain individuals enter this world and make such an impact that we are left in awe of their accomplishments. They truly make a mark on what we know of life. The last lesson they bring us is the frailty of life's gift. These geniuses, like all of us, leave this life, and we are left to wonder what we will do without their guiding light.

Currently, the dental community is mourning the loss of one of its true geniuses, Dr. Carl E. Misch, a man of significant impact in all of our lives. His passion and lifelong dream was to elevate the standard of care in implant dentistry, and he worked tirelessly in the pursuit of that end. Through the development of various principles and classifications that have become the origins of modern implant dentistry, he truly changed the lives of his students, colleagues and patients. In addition to his gifts as a highly skilled clinician, he had an uncanny ability to engage and teach fellow dentists what he had learned along the way. He unselfishly gave others the gift of his knowledge, as his true belief was to always "share what you have learned." Carl Misch was, in the truest sense of the words, a pioneer, teacher, clinician, friend and colleague. As we express our sadness for his passing, let us reflect on the life of this remarkable individual.

#### **THE BEGINNINGS OF A GENIUS**

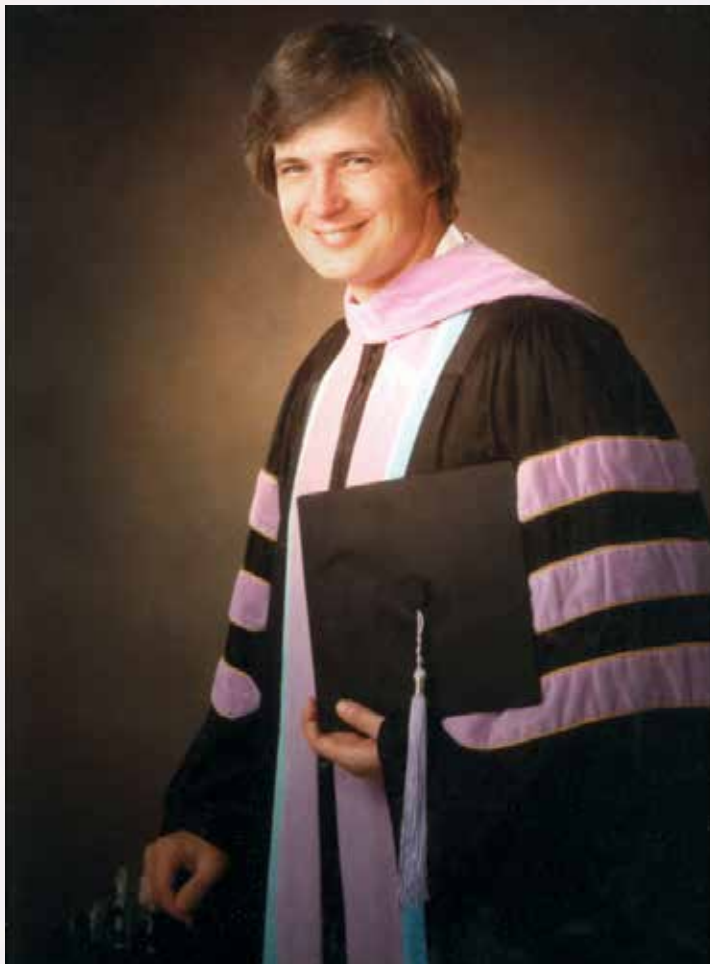
Dr. Carl E. Misch, even early in life, displayed the drive and determination that would lead him to a lifetime of success. After being involved in a tragic accident in which over 70 percent of his body was burned and spending six months in a burn unit, he defied all odds and recovered to live a full and accomplished life. His internal drive, work ethic and attention to detail allowed him to take on any task and complete it to the utmost perfection. Growing up, Carl was not only intelligently gifted, but also an amazing athlete, earning an athletic scholarship to play baseball at the University of Detroit. Prior to becoming a dentist, he was drafted into the Detroit Tigers organization. Forced to make the decision between playing professional baseball or becoming a dentist, he decided to do what was best for his family. Shortly thereafter, he entered dental school at the University of Detroit, where he graduated magna cum laude and at the top of his class in 1973.

During his dental school years, the inquisitive dental student became fascinated with the little-known field of oral implantology, which was still considered a discipline on the fringes of contemporary dental practice. Regardless, Carl aggressively pursued his passion and placed his first implant as a fourth-year dental student. Additionally, he was elected class president by his classmates and was awarded a main podium position as a dental student at an International Congress of Oral Implantologists meeting in Germany. His thirst for knowledge in oral implantology led

him to travel the world, seeking knowledge and experience from any of the earlier founders of oral implantology. This led to his tenacious pursuit of acquiring experience from some of the true pioneers in implant dentistry, including the likes of Drs. Leonard Linkow, Ken Judy, Hilt Tatum Jr., Robert James, Per-Ingvar Brånemark and Hans Grafelman.

## SPECIALTY DEGREES

In the '80s, Dr. Misch started a private practice, which was one of the first in the world specifically dedicated to implant dentistry. While maintaining this full-time specialty practice in Dearborn, Michigan, he sought specialty training in prosthodontics at the University of Pittsburgh School of Dental Medicine. To obtain his specialty degree, Carl spent nearly five years flying from Michigan to Pittsburgh every week for two to three days of studies. After receiving his prosthodontic specialty certificate, he completed research that led to multiple published papers and a master's degree from the University of Pittsburgh. After completing his specialty training, he pioneered one of the first oral implantology residency programs in the country at the University of Pittsburgh. He served as director from 1986



*Carl excelled academically, earning a bachelor's degree, a doctor of dental surgery degree, a master's degree in dental science and two Ph.D.s.*

to 1996, and quickly led the program into prominence as a world-renowned center for the development of pioneering clinical principles and research in implant dentistry.

## HIS LEGACY — THE MISCH INSTITUTE

In 1984, Dr. Misch founded the Misch International Implant Institute, which was one of the first hands-on, one-year continuums for dental implant education in the world. The institute's scientific-based curriculum became world-renowned and remains at the forefront of implant dentistry today through research, education and its unique clinical applications. The Misch philosophy and teachings have evolved and expanded over the years, and have been taught in many cities in the United States, along with locations in Brazil, Canada, France, Italy, Japan, Korea, Monaco, Spain and the United Kingdom. Through the years, six major universities have used the Misch Institute exclusively for their implant dentistry curriculum, including oral surgery, periodontal and prosthodontic residencies. To date, over 5,000 dentists have been trained by the Misch Institute, which is known worldwide as the premier center for dental implant training.



*Dr. Misch at the University of Pittsburgh School of Dental Medicine, one of the many universities at which he held positions.*

## HONORS/AWARDS

During his life, Dr. Misch was awarded numerous postdoctoral degrees and received a tremendous amount of recognition. He was bestowed Ph.D. degrees (honoris causa) from both the Yeditepe University in Istanbul, Turkey, and Carol Davila University of Medicine and Pharmacy in Bucharest, Romania. He was a member of and awarded an honorary degree from Omicron Kappa Upsilon, the national dental honor society. Additionally, he has been presented with 12 fellowships in dentistry, including the American College of Dentists, International College of Dentists, Royal Society of Medicine, American Association of Hospital Dentists and the Academy of Dentistry International. In 2014, the American Dental Association's board of trustees presented the Distinguished Service Award to Dr. Misch. This is the highest honor conferred by the ADA.

## WRITINGS

In the '90s, Dr. Misch authored the text, "Contemporary Implant Dentistry," which is currently in its third edition and has become one of the most popular textbooks in dentistry. This book has been translated into nine languages, including Japanese, Spanish, Portuguese, Turkish, Italian and Korean. Additionally, his text, "Dental Implant Prosthetics," (Elsevier) is in its second edition. His books are used in dental schools throughout the world for graduate and postgraduate programs. In March 2017, the long-awaited textbook, "Avoiding Complications in Oral Implantology," which I had the honor to coauthor with Dr. Misch, will be published by Elsevier. Dr. Misch published over 250 articles and lectured in every state in the United States as well as 50 different countries throughout the world. Dr. Misch also held 16 patents in dentistry and was the coinventor of the BioHorizons Maestro™ implant system.



*Carl with two of his close friends and mentors, Drs. Ken Judy and Leonard Linkow.*

## PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

Dr. Misch served on the board of trustees at the University of Detroit Mercy, where he was also an adjunct professor in the department of prosthodontics. In addition to those commitments, he found time to serve as an adjunct professor at the University of Michigan School of Dentistry in the department of periodontics/geriatrics. His devotion to the science of biomechanics and the forces related to implantology led him to an adjunct professorship at the School of Engineering in the department of biomechanics at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. For over 10 years, he was a clinical professor and director of oral implantology at Temple University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Dr. Misch held diplomate status at the American Board of Oral Implantology/Implant Dentistry and served as board president and a member of the examining committee. He also served as president of several implant organizations including the International Congress of Oral Implantologists, American Academy of Implant Dentistry, Academy for Implants and Transplants and the American College of Oral Implantologists. He was a past president and cochairman of the board of directors of the International Congress of Oral Implantologists, the largest global implant organization. Other accomplishments include being deemed a knight by the King of Sweden and a chevalier of La Confrérie des Chevaliers du Tastevin, an esteemed French wine society.

## DISTINGUISHED PATIENTS:

Dr. Carl Misch maintained a private practice in the cities of Dearborn and Birmingham, Michigan, for over 30 years. His distinguished patients included Pope John Paul II, the King of Qatar and the Princess of the United Arab Emirates. Over 40 percent of Dr. Misch's patients flew into Michigan to be



*Dr. Misch at one of his many visitations with Pope John Paul II at the Vatican.*

treated, including many celebrities from around the country. Because of his contributions and excellence in the field of implantology, the city of Dearborn has honored him with an annual “Carl Misch Day.”

## FAMILY

Dr. Misch spent his days making an enormous impact on the world at large, but still made sure that his main focus was on his family. Carl loved his children dearly. His face lit up every time he mentioned his six wonderful children. He is survived by Paula, who dedicated her life to being a school teacher. His son Carl, a man who has his father's curiosity for the field of dental implants, is the CEO of the Misch Institute. His daughter Lara, following in her father's footsteps of caring for her fellow man, is a diagnostic medical sonographer. Jonathan, who was compelled to become a clinician like his father, is entering dental school this year at the University of Michigan. His son David is a physician completing a residency in emergency medicine, once again carrying on his father's legacy for patient care. And finally, his youngest daughter Angela is a freshman at Georgetown University. Carl also had the privilege of seeing his family continue to grow, and he was very proud of his 12 grandchildren.

## HIS IMPACT ON THE PROFESSION

There were two people in Dr. Misch's professional life that worked alongside him basically from the beginning of the early years at the Misch Institute: myself and Heidi

Cartagena. Heidi started working with Dr. Misch as a chair-side assistant over 30 years ago while still in high school. Carl assumed many roles in Heidi's life as a boss, mentor, friend and, most importantly, as a father. After Heidi's father passed away at an early age, Carl was most instrumental in Heidi's life, guiding her to the person she is today and treating Heidi as one of his children.

As for me, being fortunate to become one of his first residents, I found myself consistently amazed by the internal workings of his mind as I worked side by side with him over the last 30 years. Always inquisitive and innovative, Carl never stopped thinking about ways to elevate the standard of care in implant dentistry. For example, I remember one day we were at dinner discussing sports. In the midst of our conversation, he takes a cocktail napkin, and begins to draw a picture of a surgical instrument. This drawing went onto become an instrument that is now a very popular part of many implant dentists' surgical armamentarium. His passion for the field had no limits, and his never-ending pursuit for excellence was unprecedented.

I will always have the deepest sense of gratitude and pride for having had the pleasure of working with Carl, but most importantly, he became one of my closest friends. Along with my father, he has truly been one of the most influential role models in my life. I have been by Carl's side for almost 30 years, and he always challenged me to push harder toward becoming a better clinician, researcher and educator. His energy, drive and pursuit of excellence were



*Carl with his first two children, Paula and Carl Misch V.*



*Dr. Misch was one of the founders and cochairmen of the world's largest implant organization, the International Congress of Oral Implantologists.*

contagious, and my life was made better by his example. In my years as an educator in implant dentistry, at every opportunity, I have always felt an obligation to give students my all, as I feel the best way to honor my mentor and close friend is to abide by his wishes, and unselfishly “share what you have learned.”

Dr. Misch had an unprecedented impact on the field of implant dentistry, as most techniques and procedures today are based on his original principles and classifications. In my opinion, one of the truest signs of a genius is the ability to foresee the need for technology well before the mainstream of society even recognizes the concept. He had more to do with the inception, evolution and current principles of today’s implant dentistry than any other practitioner in the field. Few people in the field have contributed more than Dr. Misch. He gave his life to implant dentistry. He had a singular focus toward the understanding that if properly utilized, dental implants could have significant positive impacts on the health of civilization at large. His passion was centered on perfecting that craft to ensure that his vision of implantology as a common treatment method became a reality. He was a true pioneer in a time where he went against the odds and encountered much resistance. He stimulated a renaissance in implantology that will continue to touch everyone he met.

Dr. Misch will be remembered as the consummate clinician, researcher, professor and father. He lived and taught what he believed, teaching right up to the end of his life.

Not only did he continue teaching us about implantology, but he was imparting further wisdom. When faced with the prognosis of an incurable glioblastoma, Carl had a choice. He could either succumb to the time line that was laid out to him (less than one year), or he could defy the odds and continue to pursue his passion. Dr. Misch gave us three more years of his brilliance, imparting his knowledge to one audience after another, even when he could no longer stand. His fire for sharing his love of our profession pushed him on and gave him the energy continue, even under the most complicated of circumstances.

Shortly after we found out about the initial diagnosis, I remember presenting with Carl at an ICOI meeting. The room was somber with the news that Dr. Misch was ill. His words to that audience will always stick with me. He said: “Don’t worry about me; I’m blessed. You have no idea how amazing the experience of life becomes when you know it’s ending. Every bite of food, every conversation, every moment takes on so much more beauty than it ever did before. That’s a gift in itself. Let’s get to work.”

That is the beauty of life. Certain geniuses come along with great gifts. The best of these decide to dedicate their lives to sharing those gifts with others. That is a great description of Dr. Carl Misch, and I, as well as the rest of our community, will never forget him. His legacy will live on in the clinicians he has educated, the teachers he has influenced, and the patients that will benefit from his tireless and profound work.



*Carl visiting the Great Wall of China. In his career, he lectured in every state in the United States and in over 50 different countries.*



*The Misch family: (from left, clockwise) Carl Misch V, David, Paula, Jonathan, Lara, Carl and Angela.*