

President's Profile

Dr. Stephen Wheeler's 'boundless energy always focused on helping others'

Ask what's special about AO President Dr. **Stephen L. Wheeler**, Encinitas, CA, and you hear many superlatives:

"I am not sure if I have ever met a person with a more perfect balance of kindness, humor, focus, humility, and intellect," says Past President Dr. **Dayn C. Boitet** (2002-03), Fleming Island, FL, who picked Dr. Wheeler to be Annual Meeting Chair during his presidential year. "You will not find a harder, more devoted worker anywhere. He has boundless energy that is always focused on helping others."



Dr. Stephen Wheeler (left) and his partner, Dr. John Seul, in their Encinitas, CA office.

Another Past President, Dr. **Edward B. Sevetz, Jr.** (2007-08), Orange Park, FL, adds: "He's a brilliant person, who has gifts of dexterity of both his hands and his mind. He's guided by his caring heart for the people who place their trust in him when they seek his care."

On his website, one of Dr. Wheeler's patients calls him "one of those artists with implants who comes once in a lifetime."

Dr. Wheeler graduated from the University of Southern California School of Dentistry, after earning his undergraduate degree from Stanford University. After dental school, he completed a three-year Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery residency program at the L.A. County/USC Medical Center in 1981.

While Dr. Wheeler's primary practice focus after starting to practice in the San Diego, CA area was maxillofacial reconstruction, he soon found that there were other important ways to help in reconstructing a patient's ability to function and chew properly. In the mid-1980s, he became one of the first doctors in the U.S. to begin titanium root form dental implant placement. He established the Rancho Santa Fe Dental Implant Study Club in 1986 as a forum for implant dentistry training and education, which was active for 20 years.

In the early 1990s, when insurance companies stopped covering maxillofacial surgery, Dr. Wheeler turned his primary focus to dental implant reconstruction and became involved in prototype development and patient trials. When information on various implant modalities and techniques was unavailable, he developed a patient database and started retrospective and prospective studies which have been published in several journals including the *IJOMI*.

It's hard to imagine how Dr. Wheeler's preparation to serve as AO President could have been more complete. He joined the Academy in the late 1980s and has never missed an Annual Meeting since then. A Fellow of the Academy and a Titanium Society member of the Osseointegration Foundation, Dr. Wheeler served as Director, Secretary, Vice President, and President-Elect before his election as AO President.

Dr. Wheeler feels strongly that the AO is unique in its unbiased approach to presenting information dentists can use in their daily practices to improve patients' lives. He believes that implant

dentistry has a unique role in patient health. "We have the opportunity to replace a tooth in both form and function, giving something back to our patients to make them whole again," he says.

Dr. Wheeler has served on the AO Board of Directors since 2004, previously serving as Co-Chair for the 2003 International Congress of Reconstructive and Preprosthetic Surgery, and Chair for the AO Clinical Innovations Committee. He also chaired the Council on Expanding Implant Utilization, the Ad Hoc Committee on Website and Electronic Services, and the Professional Relations and Public Awareness subcommittees.

A strong advocate for expanding the AO's global presence, Dr. Wheeler has chaired the Academy's International Relations and Global Program Development (GPD) Committees. "While 20 percent of the membership hails from territories outside the U.S.," says Dr. **Michael R. Norton**, London, England, UK, current chair of the GPD Committee, "and our mission statement

reflects a global Academy, many within the organization continued to see it principally as an American academy with overseas members. However, during the last five years, much has changed. Thanks to the efforts of former AO Presidents Drs.

Peter K. Moy, Los Angeles, CA, and **Vincent J. Iacono**, Stony Brook, NY, and our current President, Dr. Stephen Wheeler, we have seen a gradually increasing commitment to develop a globalization program.



Dr. Wheeler races his Porsche GT3 at Chuckwalla Raceway, where he is a private member.

...continued on page 9

President's Profile ...continued from page 8

"As chair of the original GPD Task Force and now as President, Dr. Wheeler has thrown his full weight behind the ongoing activities of the GPD Committee," Dr. Norton continues. "He has shown himself to be a true representative and activist for AO's global membership."



Dr. Wheeler, daughter Jennifer Wheeler Kahn, son-in-law Brandon Kahn, wife Lynne, son-in-law JJ Bailey and daughter Jessica Wheeler Bailey enjoy a Kauai vacation.

Dr. Wheeler is also a member of the Advisory Board of the Institute for Dental Implant Awareness, a nonprofit organization based in Santa Monica, CA, "created to preserve the integrity of implant dentistry by supporting the team approach, and to protect patients by providing accurate information about implant treatment." He shares the Institute's concern about proper training for dentists who are either placing or restoring dental implants, as well as the inaccuracies of most of the advertising in the media. Much of the Institute's treatment guidelines for surgical placement of dental implants have been incorporated into the AO's Guidelines for the Provision of Dental Implants and Associated Patient Care.

These concerns have played a significant role in Dr. Wheeler's goal of involving more general dentists in the Academy. He has established a GP Task Force, chaired by Dr. **Steven J. Rosenstein**, Aventura, FL, to focus on recruitment

and retention of our general dental colleagues. The AO has always been focused on the "Team Approach" to implant dentistry, and Dr. Wheeler feels that general dentists are an important part of that team.

His colleagues respect him as an excellent speaker, sought after by organizations internationally. "I've served as a consultant for several implant companies, and I've had the opportunity to lecture around the world to groups as large as 2,000 doctors at a time. It has allowed me," continues Dr. Wheeler, "to share information with my international colleagues and develop lasting friendships." The lecture circuit has taken Dr. Wheeler and his wife of 35 years, **Lynne**, a dental hygienist he met in dental school at USC, to India, Egypt, Malaysia, Mexico, Japan, South Korea, and all over Europe.

His private practice today is based in Encinitas, CA, where Dr. Wheeler and his partner, **John Seul**, DMD, MD, MPH, follow the team approach while providing a full scope of oral surgery, with a primary focus on bone grafting and dental implant reconstruction. "Our goal is to help patients improve their overall health, appearance and well-being through our trademark blend of proven modern technology and an old-fashioned commitment to patient care," Dr. Wheeler says.

Dr. Wheeler and his wife, Lynne, have enjoyed giving back to their community. They have been actively involved in their church, supporting missionary families, their children's schools, Casa de

Amparo (for abused women), Children's Hospital, The Center for Neglected Childhood Diseases, Vision of Children, Patrons of the Prado, Starlight Theatre (civic light opera), The Old Globe Theater and their alma mater, USC Dental School. Mrs. Wheeler has served on the boards of many Southern California organizations, including the Board of Governors for USC.

The Wheelers are also devoted parents who enjoy getting together with their two daughters, Jennifer and Jessica, and their new husbands. (Both young women were married in 2011). Dr. Wheeler enjoys cars, both racing (he is a member of two private race tracks) and for show, and likes to get away from work routines for golfing, snow skiing and vacationing at their time share in Kauai. He is an avid "gym junkie" and usually works out every day. "I have to keep up with my kids," he says with a smile.

At this year's Annual Meeting, the Academy will offer a half-day symposium dedicated to experts from Japan lecturing in Japanese with English translation. He sincerely hopes that this, along with AO's new Charter Chapters and involvement with the FDI, will be the start of a stronger international presence. "I feel confident that the Academy will continue to expand

both at home and abroad providing the most current information on implant reconstruction, while facilitating an international forum for discussion on the safety and efficacy of both techniques and technology in this ever evolving and fascinating field," he says.



Dr. Wheeler, daughter Jessica Wheeler Bailey, wife Lynne, and son-in-law JJ Bailey ski at Mammoth.

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