Leonard I. Linkow, DDS, DMSc

Sheldon Winkler, DDS

Leonard I. Linkow, DDS, DMSc, considered by his many colleagues and students as the “Father of Oral Implantology,” died on January 26, 2017, after a long illness.

A native of Brooklyn, New York, Dr Linkow was a radio operator in the US Army Air Force during the final days of World War II. He was a professional baseball candidate, having tried out for the New York Giants under Manager Mel Ott and the director of the farm system, Carl Hubbell. When offered a contract by these two members of the Baseball Hall of Fame, Len declined in order to become a dentist.

After graduating from New York University College of Dentistry in 1952, Len devoted his life to telling not only the dental profession, but anyone around the world who would listen, the benefits of oral implants.

It was not always an easy task. Dr Linkow was attacked, ostracized, and defamed by the profession for many years. Others would have given up hope, but not Dr Linkow. He continued presenting lectures and continuing education courses throughout the world whenever and wherever he was invited, often receiving no honoraria and at his own expense.

Today the name Linkow is synonymous with dental implants. Dr Linkow is responsible for numerous innovations in implant dentistry. Among his major contributions are the blade implant, the selftapping vestplant root form implant, the tripodal subperiosteal implant, immediate loading, and the internal hex design for root form implants. He held 36 different patents. Dr Linkow was the only dentist ever to be nominated for the Nobel Prize in Medicine.

Dr Linkow practiced dentistry in New York City throughout his career. He was honored in many of the world’s greatest cities—Berlin, Madrid, Milan, Paris, Rome, Shanghai, Tokyo, and Zurich, among others. He maintained lifelong friendships with some of the most renowned people in the dental profession. He authored 19 textbooks and approximately 200 articles in dental and medical journals. He developed and introduced numerous implant systems, many of which are in use today throughout the world. A number of international congresses and seminars bear his name.

Dr Linkow was Clinical Professor of Implant Dentistry at New York University College of Dentistry at the time of his death. He also served for many years as a Clinical Professor in the Department of Prosthodontics at Temple University in Philadelphia where he demonstrated surgical and prosthodontic implant procedures to both undergraduate and advanced education students. He gave interested students and faculty unique training, which was unavailable at other dental schools.

Dr Linkow was president of the American Academy of Implant Dentistry in 1974 and since 1998 was Honorary President of the American Academy of Implant Prosthodontics.

Among the many honors Dr Linkow received are the Thomas P. Hinman Medallion in 1972 and the Aaron Gershkoff Memorial Award in 1974. He was knighted by the government of Malta in 1974 and honored by the government of Cyprus in 1979.

In 1992 New York University College of Dentistry created the first and only endowed chair in implantology in perpetuity with Dr Linkow as the recipient. New York University also established the Leonard I. Linkow Library of Implant Dentistry, which is readily available to professionals, educators, and lay persons on the internet.

Dr Linkow was 90 years old at the time of his death.