On July 12, Dr Charles Berman passed away at home at the age of 94. Charlie, as he was known to his friends, was the founder of the Academy of Osseointegration and was a world-renowned periodontist who infused great excitement and innovation into the world of dentistry.

I had the pleasure and honor of being his partner for 30-plus years.

Dr Berman was born in the Bronx, New York, on April 20, 1926. He attended the Staunton Military Academy in Virginia, where he was an All-American swimmer. Charlie served in the Navy before his undergraduate studies at the University of North Carolina. He received his dental degree from New York University. Dr Berman received his certificate in periodontics at Columbia University, where he also taught.

Charlie was a man ahead of his time! In the early 1970s, Dr Berman instituted the concept of measuring patients’ blood pressure in the dental office. He believed that people went to the dentist more often than their physician, so early diagnosis of high blood pressure would save lives. As a result, Dr Berman received an award from the American Medical Association.

Dr Berman was one of the first periodontists who believed that periodontal therapy could only be effective if the bacterial etiology was removed on a daily basis. As he used to say, “we weren’t born with these bacteria in our mouths. We contracted them from other humans.” This was very controversial at the time. Charlie was right.

In 1976, I joined Charlie in practice. He became a colleague, a mentor, and a friend. He encouraged me to become a compassionate practitioner and offer the patient the best care. Never rush; always do it right.

Dr Berman had a very innovative scientific mind. He was a voracious student of literature and was never shy about questioning a speaker on the podium. At any meeting, there was always a crowd around Charlie wanting to know what he was doing and what was new. He was more than willing to share.

In 1984, Gerry Barrack and Arthur Weinberg, both prosthodontists, invited us to attend a meeting in Toronto, where a Swedish orthopedist named Dr Brånemark would teach us about a new type of dental implant therapy. Needless to say, we were blown away. Charlie could not wait to get back to the office, where we would convert an operatory into an operating room. We would follow Dr Brånemark’s protocol to the letter.

On October 30, 1984, Charlie placed his first Brånemark implants in the anterior mandible. Charlie wanted to share the experience with the dental community and document the procedure. We had 20 or so dentists attend the surgery, and we would document and project with a video camera. Charlie knew this was important, and he wanted to share with his peers.

Once we started placing implants, the idea was to teach periodontists and surgeons how we did it. Charlie believed that education should be shared and not sold. Over the years, dozens of surgeons from around the world spent time in our office. What a great way to build relationships!

In 1986, Charlie thought that there should be an organization where practitioners of osseointegration could get together to exchange ideas. A group of us met at the Columbus Club in New York City, and the Academy of Osseointegration was born. It was Charlie who was the driving force of our organization. Over time, he was the editor of our newsletter and eventually president of the organization, but in actuality, AO was his baby.

Dr Charles Berman was a true icon of our profession and will be missed.

Dr Berman is survived by Lillian, his loving wife of 66 years, daughters JoAnn and Nina, and granddaughter Carla.

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