



Preface Soft tissue flaps



Joseph I. Helman, DMD
Guest Editor

Significant challenges are faced by the oral and maxillofacial reconstructive surgeon. As health care professionals, we are in a constant search for excellence in patient care, education, and research. The objective of this issue of the *Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery Clinics of North America* is to address the needs of a continually evolving specialty, combined with the stated goal of expected excellence.

Rehabilitation of the facial structures is a complex task. Optimal treatment requires the achievement of multiple reconstructive goals: oral competence, effective mastication, functional deglutition, preservation of speech, and an acceptable cosmetic appearance. When we assess the cosmetic needs of a patient, we should address symmetry, color, texture, strength, sensibility, and motor innervation of the tissues to be replaced. Appropriate choice of the harvest site is key in the decision process.

We can reach these stated objectives through a systematic prospective analysis by using outcome measures. The goal of academic surgery is to translate research into education and delivery of care. Successful clinical outcomes can be applied to maximize patient management.

The success of translational research in the area of reconstruction has resulted in a plethora of techniques

and a variety of donor sites available to the surgical specialist. Soft tissue pedicled flaps and free vascularized tissue transfers allow for a broad selection of alternative approaches that may resemble the original characteristics of the resected or lost tissue.

We should continue our search for optimal results at the recipient site while minimizing the morbidity of the donor site. The dramatic changes generated by ongoing prolific research in the area of tissue engineering and regeneration may allow us to develop alternative approaches to reach these goals in the near future.

Distinguished colleagues within our profession accepted the task to contribute to this issue, and I wish to express my gratitude for their contribution and dedication. The publication of this issue would not be possible without their commitment. I would also like to thank John Vassallo, Editor of the *Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery Clinics of North America*, for his help, support, patience, and perseverance.

Joseph I. Helman, DMD
Chair, Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery
University of Michigan
1500 East Medical Center Drive
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-0018, USA
E-mail address: jihelman@umich.edu