It is a great pleasure for me to write the foreword to the new book by Prof Giovanni Zucchelli for a number of reasons.

First, Prof Zucchelli has written a magnificent book that leads the reader systematically from diagnosis of esthetic defects to their treatment, describing in detail all the most advanced mucogingival surgical techniques through the various surgical stages in a step-by-step approach that makes the reader feel as if the author is by his or her side. This is a book that I am sure will captivate not only those wishing to use it as a guide to surgery but also those colleagues who will read it solely for the pleasure of broadening their horizons. It is a must-read for all wishing to embark on a career involving mucogingival surgery.

A second reason is because this is the work of one of the world’s greatest clinicians, a man who has dedicated his life to teaching and research, has done so with an innovative spirit and without prejudice, and with his work has succeeded in modifying numerous surgical procedures and introducing new techniques, thereby changing the way we practice and approach mucogingival surgery.

Lastly, I am pleased to write this foreword because for many years we trod the same professional path, until the time came when he outpaced me and I, the older, fell behind.

Massimo de Sanctis
I would like readers of this book to approach mucogingival esthetics as if they were contemplating a painting. The opinion that we form of a work of art comes from a personal reaction influenced by the impact it has on us, i.e., our first impression, in addition to the individual talent and cultural background. These three words express in a nutshell my concept of esthetics: impact, talent, and culture (or ITC in an age of acronyms). When examining a face, a smile, or simply the post-healing outcome of a mucogingival surgical procedure, one’s immediate reaction is simply to like or dislike. Our critical spirit toward a work of art is therefore influenced by the first impact it transmits in addition to our rational knowledge of its history, author, and time-social context.

Similarly, the concept of mucogingival esthetics stems from both a personal opinion and data found in the literature. For too many years patients seeking esthetic improvement have been offered clinical solutions based entirely on scientific evidence data (root coverage); however, I have come to the conclusion that we must especially offer a result that provides a positive impact. An example of this is minor corrections to the cementoenamel junction position obtained with restorative treatment when the anatomical-clinical situation limits root coverage. Knowledge and talent have been incorporated into this book to give it a pleasing esthetic look combined with clinical usefulness. To reach these goals I was helped by my friend Guido Gori, a dentist with an artistic talent, whose handmade drawings illustrate almost all the key steps of the surgical procedures. I am confident that his drawings simplify and enjoy the reading and help elucidate those stages of surgery that are difficult to document with clinical records.

This book is not intended to be, and indeed is not, the latest or the “state of the art” in mucogingival surgery. That is the purpose of scientific journal articles, among which, depending on the reader’s background, I recommend the “review articles,” ever more rare, or the “systematic reviews.” The purpose of this book instead is to describe and illustrate daily events in our office with diagnosis, prognosis, and treatment of patients with mucogingival esthetic requirements. Many of these routine passages, especially concerning prognosis and surgical techniques, have been validated by the scientific literature. Others are not and may never be, because they represent a belief, a philosophy of thought and actions that cannot be translated into statistics and numbers. In other words, they are the expression of the talent that, perhaps because it is genetically determined, can only partially be modified by culture.

These non-evidence-based passages must be interpreted purely as advice that I wish give the readers because I profoundly believe in their worth. My first, and perhaps most hazardous, advice is to never procrastinate treatment of a patient with esthetic demands because there is always the risk, even if slight, of deterioration of the mucogingival defect. Immediate action often means reducing the number of procedures and surgical sites and increases the probability of a successful esthetic treatment outcome. Each surgical technique described here takes into serious consideration not only the patient’s esthetic requirements but above all the patient as a person to whom possible postoperative discomforts and surgery-associated risks should be minimized. Even the concept of the ease of re-treatment in the event of failure is always in my thoughts and represents another priority high on my list of operative recommendations.
The real aim of this book is to combat the belief that “since it is difficult, Only I can do it.” The real aim of this book is to simplify and rationalize treatment of mucogingival esthetic defects so that all readers, even the least experienced, can perform it successfully. Since my previous book, surgical techniques have become considerably fewer, simplified, and standardized as operative sequence. Another piece of advice is strict observation of this sequence, from the incision design to the last suture, which represents a daily repetition of actions that have become automatic and, as such, are intentionally repeated in clinical case descriptions in this book. Within the pages, the reader can find the “typical” clinical case and the description of the steps to deal with it correctly.

For all those who are preparing to read what follows, I wish and hope that, like me, you will feel half artist and half scientist when you treat patients with mucogingival esthetic defects and that above all your patients are happy with the result. For myself, I hope that among the readers of this book there may be the budding talent who will further simplify esthetic treatment of mucogingival defects.

Giovanni Zucchelli
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