

Mind the Gap 5

General Dennis, Friedrich Nietzsche and Bruce's Philosophers' Song

Nigel Rosenbaum looks back at Monty Python and finds inspiration on how to remember the important bits

It's now just over 40 years since root form dental implants had their first proper outing. They have come a remarkably long way since then. Nobel Biocare recently celebrated 40 years of clinical usage of the Brånemark system. A more universally popular anniversary is upon us: 40 years of Monty Python's Flying Circus.

For those who are wondering where we are going, I urge you to stay with me a little longer. An often quoted song from the hand of Eric Idle was, as rumour has it, based on a number of lecturers, all called Bruce, in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Woolloomooloo. Whilst there isn't actually a university there, it is effectively Sydney University. I refer of course, to Bruce's Philosophers' Song: infectiously memorable lyrics making a series of scurrilous allegations against a number of highly respected philosophers. I'm sure some of you will recall *'Heidegger, Heidegger was a boozy beggar, who could think you under the table'* and the classic line *'Rene Descartes was a drunken f*rt. I drink therefore I am.'* Before you can finish your glass it's etched eternally on your mind. Nietzsche is in there too. *'There's nothing Nietzsche couldn't teach ya 'Bout the raising of the wrist. Socrates, himself, was permanently pi**ed.'* But you remember the words. How come?

Somewhat ironically it's worth looking to Nietzsche and his influential book entitled *The Gay Science*. In it Nietzsche argues that rhyming poetry fascinated primitive minds appearing to be associated with magic and was linked to communicating with the gods. Whilst this message failed to score in the wider community, recent research is fully behind it. Psychologists Matthew McGlone and Jessica Tofighbakhsh in their paper entitled "Birds of a feather flock conjointly" published in *Psychological Science* devised a neat experiment to determine how accurately people rated a statement. Their results proved that a rhyming statement was viewed as significantly more accurate than a non-rhyming statement. How else did you (and probably still do) remember the cranial

nerves? If it's the version I learnt it is obviously unrepeatable in such a forum as this. But a rhyme or acronym can help a great deal. Remember the BULL rule? Buccal Upper Lingual Lower. Unfortunately named, and also useless, however it has that irritating habit of sticking in the mind. It was particularly despised by the much missed Bill Comcovitch, an exceptional dental practitioner from Aspen, Colorado. For those not familiar with the name, Bill taught thousands of clinicians concepts of occlusion which have ever since stood the test of time. "Occlusion is dentistry". That was his catch phrase. But Bill – it never rhymed, so no one's gonna believe it. Bill frequently referred to General Dennis. I wondered if General Dennis was another believer? Then it struck me. Hidden in the midst of Bill's Southern US drawl was the phrase 'general dentist'. Hurray, this was stuff for the General Dental Practitioner, and General Dennis was just the US version.

Ok, I hear you say, what's Dennis got to do with all this? Granted, it's a little tenuous, but hey it is Christmas, and I can't imagine Christmas without thinking of New York. Now I don't know who said it first, but Dennis Tarnow (Professor in Periodontology and Implantology, New York University College of Dentistry) reckons it's his, but it rhymes and that's a good enough start: "Tissue is the issue; but bone sets the tone". If you can remember that, then you're well on your way to being an implant dennis.