Esthetics and the brain

By Editor in Chief David L. Hoexter, BA, DMD, FACD, FICD

The age-old question as to what constitutes beauty has been subject-
ed to yet another wrinkle. Research has been presented showing that left-sided brain people perceive beauty differently than right-sided ones. Beauty is and has been per-
ceived through the ages through individual eyes. Perhaps different cultures encourage different zones of desire and contentment; also, people of different ages may have different views. Whatever the cause or conditioning, our visions encour-
age that beautiful zone. Is it due to conditioning, our visions encour-
age that beautiful zone. Is it due to our youth’s environment, perhaps where our mother’s left side of the brain influenced our concepts early, relating to beauty?

When I was presenting cosmetic periodontal techniques in Sicily, Italy, at a congress dedicated to esthetics in dentistry, Dr. DeLuc-
ca, an exquisite prosthodontist with exceptional esthetic prosthet-
ics results, brought up factors and questions regarding the effects of

esthetics from the right and left

sides of the brain as well as the

male/female dominance in their

respective spheres.

The brain has been relegated to
different functions on its left and
right side in several factors. The
right side is said to be more analyti-
cal, more detailed, as well as more

scientific, mathematical, computer-
istic, logical and analytical. In gen-
eral, the right side is usually related
to males.

The left side of the brain is, in

general, attributed to the female

gender. Its characteristics are said
to be non-verbal, intentional, emo-
tional, excellence in spacial rela-
tionships, and good color percep-
tion.

In the past 20 plus years of den-
tistry, esthetics has changed the

face of the profession. This is not
meant to be a pun but an actual fact.
The desire by patients to electively
choose to have dentistry is a huge
leap from its image of yesteryear.
Not relying on motivation from
pain or trauma, patients are eagerly
trying to improve their appearance
orally. A wonderful bright smile
can light up the face and the public
is now aware of this fact.

At about the same time that cos-
metic improvement was encour-
gaged by our profession, the profile
of the dental school population started
to change. The number of female
dental students became more pre-
dominant than ever before in the
United States. Was this the left side
of the brain making its mark?

The initiating pioneers in the
dental esthetic field, Drs. Irwin
Smigel and Ron Goldstein, forged
awareness to the public as well as
dentists, and encouraged the
dentist to provide the services
that stimulated dental companies
to research and provide better esthet-
ically appearing, yet formidable,
restorative materials. Did it take

these pioneers the use of the right
side of their brain to forge this field
of esthetics?

In other countries throughout
the world, the number of female
dental school graduates has been
higher than males for years. In
addition, 85 percent is the com-
mon percentage of female dentists
practicing in many such countries.
In the U.S., that number hovers at
about 50 percent.

Does the right side of the brain
dominate our field with the neces-
sary precision that is demanded?
Have the materials in dentistry
today improved so much that there
is compensation in techniques to
allow the left side of the brain’s
activity to transcend and emit an
esthetic sensitivity for the patient’s
appearance? Can the individual
dentist utilize the left and right
side of his or her brain as noted in
today’s terminology by the expres-
sion “crossover?”

Will the economic turmoil of
today affect the demand by patients
for cosmetic dentistry beyond the
necessary health requirements? I
know that for me to find the answer
regarding the male/female, left and
right brain relationships, I should
smilingly have to ask my wife.

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