

Technician's Notes

By Robert Kreyer, CDT



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What is the crisis in dental technology?

I believe this crisis stems from decreasing and, in some programs, elimination of dental technology education in dental schools. In the past dentists were required to master different levels of laboratory procedures as part of their clinical dental education. This technical laboratory education gave dentists a baseline to assess quality restorations. If a general dentist is not technically educated in dental laboratory procedures then what is the basis used to assess the quality and value of prosthetic restorations they receive from a dental laboratory? If the dentists value of a dental laboratory is based on price and not quality or service this will definitely affect the quality standards of prosthetic restorations in dentistry and thus reduce the quality of care.

This reduced exposure to dental technology during dental school education has resulted in

expanding the experienced dental technologist's role to a prosthetic technical consultant. The problem is a dental technologist's competency expectations are increasing with sophisticated technical requirements of new equipment and procedures combined with our expanding functions as technical consultants. Our technical compensation in relation to our technical competency requirements is very minimal as compared to other technology-based professions. According to the NADL "entry level salary for a dental technician is significantly less than what other allied health professionals make starting out". According to McGarry and Jacobson's article in *JADA* (v.135 February 2004), "The educational and economic imbalances of the past are now being reversed with dental technologists being the most knowledgeable members of the dentist/dental laboratory technician partnership in the area of laboratory techniques, instrumentation and materials".

If dental school graduates are not able to assess the quality of prosthetic restorations they receive from a dental laboratory then what is the value in a dental technician certification program? How can dentistry value certification of dental technicians if dental schools do not value educating dentists in dental technology or dental laboratory procedures to assess the quality of prosthetic restorations? A dental team (clinical and technical) approach to treatment is essential to provide opti-

mal patient care. To create a true prosthetic dental team approach in restorative dentistry there must be an integration of clinical and technical dental education in dental schools. A concerted effort must be made by the American Dental Education Association, American Dental Association, Dental Technology Educators, and Dental School Administrators if we are to provide patients with the optimal care they deserve and expect from the dental profession.

Our ACP Alliance emphasizes the importance of close interaction between dental technicians and dental clinicians. We believe that by providing advanced dental technology education through integrated clinical and technical continuing education programs the standards for all prosthetic services will be elevated to the next level of patient care.

At the ACP Annual Session in Los Angeles, our ACP Alliance will have its first social reception. This first Annual Alliance reception will be on Friday October 28, 2005 from 4:00-5:30pm at the Westin Century Plaza Hotel and Spa in Los Angeles, California. Be a part of the exciting changes in dental technology and become informed by attending the ACP Annual Session "Prosthodontics: The New Horizons" and our ACP Alliance reception.



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