Continuous and never ending improvement...a philosophy of excellence

Applying the concept of Kaizen to the work of a dental technician.

"Knowledge has to be improved, challenged, and increased constantly or it vanishes."
– Peter Drucker

Sometimes it is good to just get back to basics.

We live in a world that is cluttered with too much information. Magazines, websites, social media and every other avenue of content is trying to publish the next new thing. All of this information can only serve to confuse the dentist and technician and distract them from their main focus of providing patients with the very best possible outcomes. With all of the new technology in the form of techniques and materials, it is not difficult to lose our way.

Fig. A A tooth shade is never truly just one color.
Fig. B Posteriors often have more shade nuance than anteriors.
Fig. C A complex posterior shade is achieved using GC Initial MC.
Fig. D Natural abutment shade is crucial to any successful restoration.
Fig. E A harmonious, natural result is achieved with GC Lustre Paste.
Fig. F Correct understructure shade can alloy the technician greater options...
Fig. G ...such as using the refractory technique...
Fig. H ...which in turn leads to an outstanding, natural result.
Fig. I The veneers in this case blend into the surrounding dentition.
So many dentists and technicians only bring out their cameras for anterior dentistry. However, mastering shade doesn’t stop at the bicuspids. We can learn a lot from matching posterior shades, that can be applied in any circumstance.

Digital communication should be applied for every case, as most posterior teeth have more color effects and demarcations than anterior teeth (Figs. A and B). By simply using base shades we could never accomplish the harmonious blending that we see in Figure C which was done with GC America’s GC Initial MC (gcamerica.com) in this case completed with Dr. Barry Polansky.

Most patients and dentists accept much less than this in the “back of the mouth,” because it can’t be seen. But we do see it.

When determining a shade, another important image to capture is the natural abutment color (Fig. D). This is of utmost importance in order to see what has to be covered and/or blocked out.

With a base shade and abutment selection we can achieve a harmonious natural restoration achieved with GC Lustre Paste in Figure E in a case with Dr. Charles Ward.

With a restoration such as this, we can be proud to show the patient how we went the extra mile.

The natural abutment image serves a very important purpose and should be required minimal information with every case. With a nice understructure (Fig. F) the technician can use the natural abutment color as the foundation of color.

EXPANDING INFORMATION

With this information the technician can feel comfortable going forward with utilizing the refractory technique (Fig. G). This makes the process so much easier and yields a much more natural result (Fig. H).

The overall goal is to create veneers that blend with the natural teeth, such as those in Figure I which were completed with GC Initial MC.

The more information the doctor sends, the more predictable the outcome. As part of the continual and never ending improvement philosophy, the technician should require certain minimal inputs from the dentist.

A preoperative model is required for every case, with a list of the patient and doctor’s desires (Fig. J).

The pre-operative model provides the technician with a starting point and a key to mapping out the destination. It reveals the story of wear and any other possible functional issues.

Full facial images are important to better “get to know the patient.” Photos of the preparations can reveal the nuances of the case as far as parallelism and shades for masking (Fig. K).

The ultimate level of information comes from models and photos of the provisionals (Fig. L). The provisionals act as the theoretic template for the final case. They should have been approved cosmetically and functionally by the patient (Fig. M).

FOUNDATION IN RELATION

The resulting case completed using GC Initial ZR with Dr. Mike Monokian (Figs. N-P) shows how results can become more consistent and predictable when the dentist and technician work together for continuous and never ending improvement.

Using photography is the next best thing to the technician actually being chairside. Creating beautiful and functionally correct restorative dentistry is a process. It is a process that depends on many factors, none more important than the dentist-technician relationship.

Without that relationship there will be breakdown in communication somewhere.

Kaizen—continuous improvement—is what many industries use to give us their best products in the 21st Century. It’s time for dentistry to put that philosophy to work as well.

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