

Restorative dentistry in the millennium: Adhesive, esthetic, predictable!

In 1995, who of us accurately predicted the significance of Buonocore's "simple method of increasing the adhesion of acrylic filling materials to enamel surfaces"?¹ Who of us could have accurately forecast the state of adhesive dentistry as we now know it at the 41-year anniversary of his seminal research?

Never in the history of dentistry have we been able to offer so many options to so many people with such assurance of success! The "esthetic revolution" is transferring need-driven dentistry into want-driven dentistry. This is a powerful force in contemporary society around the world, and dentists who wish to offer private practice fee-for-service options should devote themselves to excellent, predictable adhesive restorative dental options as an integral part of their practices.

Many of us were trained as scientists to be in charge of the health of the human oral cavity. We are well-trained both, and if you were trained like I was, we were admonished not to treat teeth that didn't have a pathologic condition. We generally were not well-trained in the artistry of dentistry—the creation/restoration of natural beauty that maintains form, function, health, and appearance.

Today we understand that the care of the "whole" person requires attention to self-image, personal appearance, and personal sense of attractiveness. To provide this type of service, we need to train ourselves to be better artists. The technology of adhesive dentistry has moved so rapidly that our schools are only able to expose predoctoral students to the very basic elements of esthetic dentistry. Consequently the burden is on each of us individually to learn both the artistry and techniques of modern adhesive dentistry in a self-directed fashion.

Check a Quintessence booklist. Many of the current texts deal with appearance-related practice. A growing number of dental schools around the globe are beginning to offer courses in adhesive esthetic restorative dentistry. Some of the best esthetic restorative dentists in the world are teaching hands-on courses in a sequential curriculum-based style that complements other advanced courses and various general dental residencies.

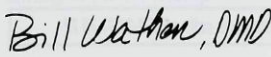
Many of us believe that a dentist must actually perform new procedures under the benevolent eye of a doctor experienced and knowledgeable in the subject to learn it well enough to take it into one's practice and use it. Just as

watching a videotape of soccer cannot lead one to success on the field, lectures and slides alone do not insure understanding and clinical capability. When coupled with actual patient treatment while the mentors are in attendance, however, the results have been incredible. In our own experience in advanced continuing education, these courses have led to astonishing growth in the practices of those who attend.

Essentially all adhesive restorative systems available today have been used in our courses. They all work, and they work well. Obviously, each has its own strengths and weaknesses, but we have found five fundamental guidelines that go a long way toward insuring success.

1. Educate yourself and your patient completely.
2. Diagnose comprehensively and accurately.
3. Control *all* disease and other factors that contribute to oral disharmony prior to beginning the final restorative phase, and verify that patients will be responsible for maintaining their own health.
4. Only then should one begin to perform final esthetic restorations, on a fully informed and compliant patient. Follow the specific manufacturers' directions precisely.
5. Continue to learn, improve, and inspire.

This approach sounds simple, and it is simple. There are no magic potions or secret recipes for a successful dental practice. A comprehensive dedication to patient needs and development of our own technical skills are the foundations of clinical practice. Journals, study clubs, textbooks, and formal courses are the tools. In the end, it is up to each of us individually to plan and execute our own track for professional development. That is the mission of this journal. We invite you to participate.



William F. Wathen, DMD
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Suggested readings

1. Buonocore MG. A simple method of increasing adhesion of acrylic filling materials to enamel surfaces. *J Dent Res* 1955;34:849-853.