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The Team Approach

A search of Medline using the terms *team*, *approach*, and *dentistry* will result in a wide range of articles discussing an interdisciplinary approach to coordinated patient treatment. If you interview your colleagues about their “team approach,” you are likely to get a similar variety of definitions and interpretations. A closer look at this concept reveals some important details and variations in these approaches that need to be addressed.

The first question to be addressed is: What teams are we talking about? That is, who are the members of these teams and what role do the team members play?

The basic team comprises the patient and the clinician (and staff, including dental hygienists). With more complex cases, this team expands to include specialists, such as orthodontists, periodontists, prosthodontists, and endodontists. Medical specialists also may need to be consulted in some cases; this occurs more frequently as the number of older patients seeking treatment continues to increase.

For most, the above-mentioned parties immediately come to mind when thinking about a team approach to dentistry. But what about lab technicians? In many publications, the lab technicians are not even mentioned, although they play an integral role in the clinical outcome of all types of indirect restorations, such as inlays, onlays, veneers, crowns, and fixed partial dentures. Their knowledge of the materials and their manual skills are a key factor in the clinical success of these restorations. Why then are they not always considered official team members? Does the importance and esteem assigned to this profession vary amongst different countries worldwide? It's up to you, dear reader, to answer this question!

In the meantime, *The European Journal of Esthetic Dentistry* expresses its appreciation of the contributions provided by lab technicians to our daily practices. In the spirit of that support, this issue includes four articles authored by lab technicians.