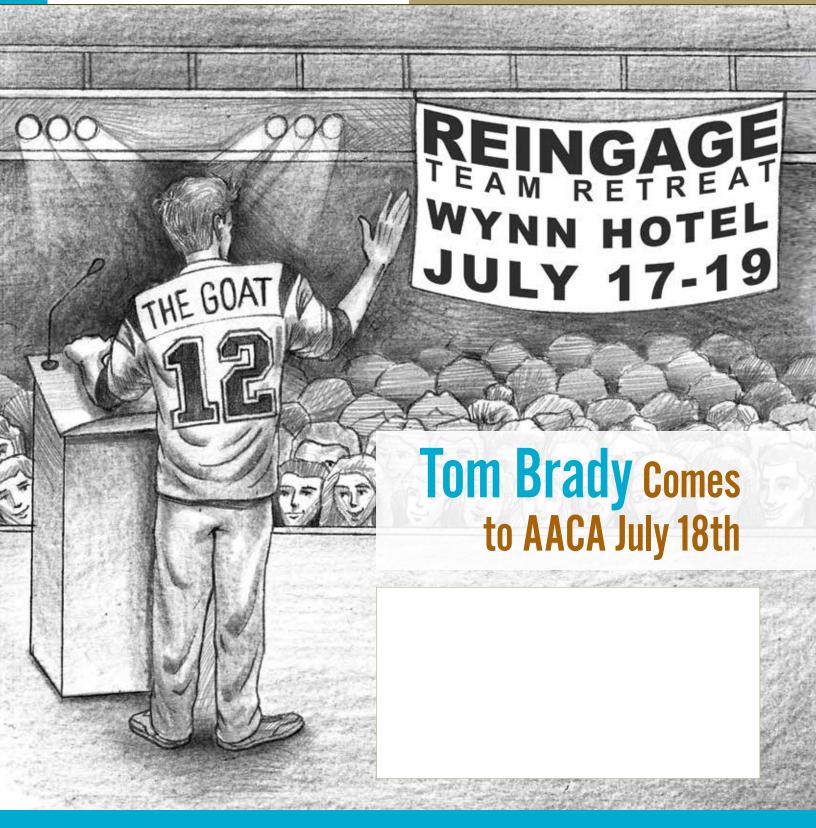


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Darren Boggs, CEO Altius Healthcare Management





Dr. Jeffrey Galler Editor

Editorial

The ADA recently warned its members that depending on how they manage their employees' benefit plans (including dental), a federal law could enable carriers to bypass some important protections for those employees.

The federal law, the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA), regulates medical plans that are "self-funded"—the employer bears the cost of claims but

pays a carrier to administer the plan. At present, 46% of subscribers are covered by plans of this kind.

Many states have passed insurance laws that protect employees. One such law, for example, prohibits insurers from setting and enforcing the fees that dentists can charge for services that the insurers don't cover. Another type of law, known as assignment of benefits, requires insurers to pay practitioners directly if the subscribers request it, even if the practitioners are out of network.

Yet carriers of self-funded plans have flouted these laws, asserting that ERISA supersedes or "preempts" them. This despite recent U.S. Supreme Court rulings suggesting that the claims of preemption are specious or exaggerated.

The ADA believes that dentists can and should work together to spread public awareness of this issue, to help document such abuses as they happen, and to advocate for reform. You can learn more about the problem, and what you can do about it, by going to www.ada.org/advocacy/advocacy-issues/erisa-plans.

Dr. Jeffrey Galler

Editor



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AACA News

The Reingage Team Retreat—Special Guest: Tom Brady

by David Galler, DMD



This year, the Gallerite Reunion convention has a new name and a new theme: the Reingage Team Retreat (RTR). Sticking with a winning venue, we'll be meeting again at the Wynn Hotel in Las Vegas, July 17–19, 2024.

When you, the dentist, come and take the Reingage course, I can help elevate your clear aligner skills from zero to the Gold or the Gold Plus

level. I do this by teaching you how to do IPR, how to optimize your ClinChecks, how to use attachments, how to diagnose cases, and which cases to treat and which cases not to treat.

But really, to get to the higher levels of Invisalign success—the Platinum, Platinum Plus, or Diamond levels—we need the efforts of the entire team in the dental office. If the hygienist is not diagnosing and treatment planning; if the assistant is not scanning and encouraging; if the office manager is not closing, or cannot offer creative treatment plans, or doesn't provide proper insurance information, there will be a low acceptance rate for needed treatment.

So, this year, the focus of the convention is on getting a team working together, as a team, to reach a single goal. The theme of the convention is: Why Not Us?

We see quite a large number of offices, both urban and rural, that have successfully completed over 250 Invisalign case yearly. And, that level of success, that can net between a half-million to a million dollars, can be achieved with minimal effort on the part of the dentist.

Unlike the rigors and stresses of difficult restorative cases, Clear Aligner cases are typically easier and less stressful, and, from the dentist's point of view, can almost feel like pursing an enjoyable hobby. This level of success can be achieved through the efforts of dedicated teams in not only gigantic practices with 18+ operatories, but also in modest sized, 2-3 operatory offices.

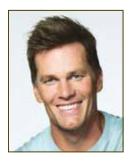
Why Not Us? Look in the mirror and ask, "Why aren't we achieving such tremendous success?"

The simple answer is that the common denominator for this level of success is having a dedicated dental team, all focused on a common, attainable goal.

And who better to speak about winning culture and winning teams than the GOAT himself?

Seven-time World Championship winner, New York Times bestselling author, and entrepreneurial mogul Tom Brady has garnered accolades on and off the field as a leader and expert in peak performance.

Brady has won 19 division titles, 7 World Championships, 3 football MVPs, and 3 first-team all-pro awards, all while pioneering a holistic approach to preparation, performance, and recovery. Brady's motivational book, The TB12 Method: How to Achieve a Lifetime of Sustained Peak Performance, has gone on to become a New York Times #1 bestseller.



Tom Brady has won consistently, despite often working with different casts of players and personnel. Even after switching from Boston to Tampa Bay, working with different coaches, players, and management, he motivated his teammates to reach the playoffs all 3 years. Winning team, winning culture!



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Director of Clinical Research University of Michigan School of Dentistry

Diplomate and Past Chair American Board of Periodontology

Case Reports

No Distractions, Just Extractions and Retraction

by Jeremy Kurtz, DDS



Dr. Jeremy Kurtz is a graduate of the University of Toronto School of Dentistry. He is a general dentist who maintains a unique private practice in Toronto that focuses exclusively on Invisalign and dental implant therapy. Dr. Kurtz is a guest lecturer at various Invisalign and implant study

clubs in Toronto. He is a Diamond Plus (previously called Top 1%) Invisalign GP provider and enjoys making his patients smile with Clear Aligner Therapy.

Sandra, a patient in her mid-20s, presented to our office.

She was not confident with her smile at all (**Figure 1**) and confided to me that she rarely smiled. She desperately wanted to straighten her teeth but really did not want to wear braces. She had consulted with multiple dental offices and orthodontists and been told by all that she was not a good candidate for Clear Aligner Therapy. After performing an iTero scan of her teeth and assessing her case, I looked her in the eyes and said, "You are a good candidate for Invisalign Clear Aligner Therapy. You will smile with confidence." Sandra looked at me in disbelief and started to cry.

I recognized this case as being a typical 4-bicuspid extraction, which with the correct planning can be treated well with Clear Aligner Therapy. There were, however, a few potential distractions—challenges specific to this case that needed some special consideration.

- Gingival tissue: The gums in the anterior were quite edematous and inflamed. This was largely related to crowding and malocclusion of the teeth, which I was confident that aligning of the teeth and proper periodontal care could easily resolve.
- 2. **Lingual position of tooth #26:** Given the extreme lingual position of tooth #26, it might appear more prudent to remove this tooth instead of tooth #28.







Figure 1: pre-treatment. Note the inflamed gingiva, extreme lingual position of #26, severe mesial angulation of mandibular canines, and high position of maxillary canines.



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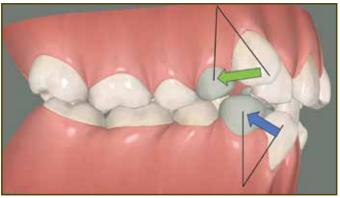


Figure 2a: uprighting of the canines is mostly a tipping movement.



Figure 2b: extraction of tooth #26 would necessitate a very difficult movement for tooth #27.



Figure 3: G6 attachments used in extracting Sandra's first bicuspids.

- 3. **Severe mesial angulation of mandibular canines:**Would a clear aligner be able to upright and distalize these teeth simultaneously?
- 4. **High position of maxillary canines:** Extrusion is not the most predictable of clear aligner movements. Would I need to use auxiliary buttons and elastics to achieve these movements?

After using the ClinCheck treatment planning software to perform a closer digital analysis of the movements required and to compare multiple treatment plans, I came to the following conclusions:

• The mandibular canines, and in particular tooth #27, were very mesially inclined. If you draw a line along the long axis









Figure 4: after 33 aligners but before Refinement.

of the tooth (**Figure 2a**), it is apparent that uprighting of this tooth is mostly a tipping movement. The plastic of the tray pushes the mesial surface of the tooth, and via relative extrusion the tooth will be moved upright and into the Increase Your
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desired position (blue arrow). Minimal root distalization will be required.

- The same is true for the maxillary canines (green arrow), via relative extrusion and pushing of the plastic along the mesial surfaces of the teeth. All these movements are predictable and use the "pushing" forces inherent in clear aligner plastic.
- On the other hand, if tooth #26 were to be extracted (although from the occlusal view this may seem to be the ideal tactic), the root of #27 would need to move mesially and simultaneously rotate. The movements required are much more difficult, and the canine root would need to swing mesially and upright beyond the physical extent of the mandible (**Figure 2b, yellow arrow**).

Given these considerations, we chose to extract all 4 of Sandra's first bicuspids. I used G6 Posterior Open Bite Prevention Attachments designed for optimized retraction and anchorage in first-bicuspid extractions (**Figure 3**).

Thirty-three trays and 9 months later (10 days wear time at first, later shortened to 7 days), Sandra's teeth were well on their way (**Figure 4**).

I ordered a Refinement, mostly to close residual spaces and solidify Sandra's occlusion. After a set of 28 Refinement trays over 7 months (7 days' wear each), the patient was on cloud 9 and smiling confidently (**Figure 5**).

Sandra said we literally changed her life!

In summary, here are the stats:

- 61 trays
- 16 months
- 4 bicuspid extractions
- 1 very proud dentist
- 1 extremely happy and confidently smiling patient
- No distractions, just extractions and retraction!







Figure 5: post-treatment..



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Oh, the Places You Can Go, and the Things You Can Do!



by Richard Schmidt, BSc, DDS

The creative use of Clear Aligner Therapy can help correct common dental problems often encountered by clinicians. This article will discuss how dentists can handle 2 different restorative challenges, via clear aligner orthodontic treatment. Dr. Schmidt is a frequent contributor to this Journal, and has enhanced the lives of many patients with his clear aligner expertise.

Case 1: Restoring a short clinical crown

When a tooth loses occlusal tooth structure, either to wear or to caries, the tooth will usually undergo dento-alveolar eruption (DAE) to regain occlusal contact. If one were to restore the extruded molar in its pre-treatment position, one would create a very short clinical crown after the occlusal reduction (**Figure 1**). This would compromise the retention form of the crown. To reverse this movement, aligners are the appliance of choice for dento-alveolar intrusion (DAI).





Figure 1: tooth #19 presented with a short clinical crown due to a loss of occlusal tooth structure, caused by deep caries. Note how, after treatment, occlusal clearance was achieved through orthodontic intrusion rather than by reducing occlusal tooth structure during crown preparation. The gingival margin is now more even with the gingival margins of the cuspid and premolars, and, as a result, there is increased clinical crown height for the #19 crown.

Case 2: Phasing anterior restorative treatment

When a patient presents with anterior teeth that have shortened/worn incisal edges, trying to finalize a proper occlusion can be challenging. Therefore, prior to detailing the anterior guidance with additional aligners, we restored the worn incisal edges of the anterior teeth with resin restorations (**Figure 2**). We then scanned the teeth and ordered additional aligners. To provide retention for the teeth in their current position during the planning of the next ClinCheck, the last existing aligner was modified to seat over the top of the newly restored incisal edges.





Figure 2: the worn incisal edges of the anterior teeth were restored with resin restorations, and the teeth were then scanned and additional aligners ordered.



After practicing general dentistry with his wife, Dr. Tamara Sosath, for over 30 years, Dr. Richard Schmidt is now retired, but continues to teach and devote his time and energies to make the world of dentistry a better place for dentists and patients.





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2024 Reingage Team Retreat Schedule

Wednesday July 17th

11:30 am Registration Opens

12:00 pm-2:00 pm Lunch

12:00 pm-3:00 pm Exhibit Hall Opens

4:00 pm-5:30 pm Opening Session & Award Ceremony

5:30 pm-7:30 pm Welcome Reception & Exhibit Hall Reopens

9:00 pm–TBD Amazing Race:

Las Vegas Edition!



Thursday July 18th

6:30 am-8:00 am Breakfast

6:30 am-7:00 pm Exhibit Hall Opens 8:00 am-12:00 pm Clinical Modules:

Dental Assistant Track

Hygienist Track

Office Manager Track

Doctor Track:

• Ortho Cosmetic Restorative: Dr. Sheena Sood & Friends

• Tips, Tricks, Techniques, & Troubleshooting: Dr. Michele Ranta & Friends

• Vitaly's Way: Dr. Vitaly Gantman

12:00 pm-1:00 pm Lunch

1:30 pm-2:30 pm AACA Presents: The Next Big Thing

2:30 pm-3:30 pm Keynote Speaker: Tom Brady

3:30 pm-5:30 pm Shareholder Meeting: Backed By Dentists

7:00 pm-9:30 pm Sphere Experience: Las Vegas's Hottest New Attraction



Friday July 19th

6:30 am-8:00 am

Breakfast

6:30 am-12:00 pm

Exhibit Hall Opens

8:00 am-10:00 am

HANDS-ON Breakouts

- Dental Assistant: Scanning
- Hygiene: Case Scenarios, Discussion, & Scripting
- Office Manager: Leadership 101

Doctor:

- ClinCheck 3D Controls & Plan Editor: Dr. Christina Blacher
- · Smile Architect: Dr. Sheena Sood
- Virtual Care: Kylee Barnett

10:00 am-12:00 pm Team Brainstorms & Goal Setting

- Learning Love Languages
- What Would Galler Do?: Dealing with Complex Patients and Situations
- Why Not Us? RTR Review, Action Plans, & Goals

12:00 pm

Retreat Ends

Gallerite Bonus Workshops

2:00 pm-6:00 pm

Bonus Workshops (Separate Registration Required)

- Fotona: Hands-On Light Walker
- Katie To: Advanced Cosmetic Injection Molding
- Team Training Institute: Reaching Peak Performance as a Team







With Keynote Speaker Tom Brady

Practice Management

How to Compete With Insane Wages in Your Area

by Chelsea Mortell Petisme, DMD, FAACA



Dr. Chelsea Mortell Petisme graduated from OHSU School of Dentistry in 2012. Born and raised in the Seattle area, she is now a general practitioner in Kirkland, Washington. Chelsea has owned as many as 6 offices at once with multiple associates over the last 11 years. Since taking Reingage

in 2017, Chelsea has become a Platinum Invisalign provider. She is also an AACA Align speaker, AACA Seattle Study Club member, AACA board member and KOL, Fellow of the AACA, and ClinCheck Cowboy.

She resides in Kenmore, Washington, with her husband and office CFO Vince, kids Georgiana (4) and Vince Jr. (2), and dogs Betty and Barney. Her passion is to make Invisalign profitable and simpler for the general practitioner through simplifying Invisalign workflow.

Recently, I was reading a proposed change by our dental board in Washington state. This proposed revision cited the economic impact of the proposed change, and calculated it, using what the board called "average wages in the state." It was shared to a group text message of a local study club, where the members had a good laugh, because the dental board used numbers from 10 years ago.

As we all know, wages in the past 3 years, post-COVID, have risen astronomically. In my area near Seattle, average hygiene wages are 22% higher than they were 3 years ago. Dental assistants' wages in my offices are 25% higher and candidates have zero experience, so we are training on the job. This probably comes as no surprise, as I hear of this same scenario happening across the country, not just in Washington state.

The real question here is, How do we compete with these crazy wages, and find employees that won't job-hop for a dollar more an hour? It used to be that you could pay slightly above average and find experienced people whom you could retain long-term.

In our post-COVID world, people have no issue hopping from job to job. We as employers have fewer candidates for our positions and are tolerating employees that have no loyalty to their employers, us! In turn, we are having to join the insanity, poaching employees by offering additional compensation that is most likely above the market rate.

I have noticed that paying someone more (no matter how crazy the wage) does not mean getting a better employee. In fact, in a lot of circumstances, they are worse when we go so high on that wage. It's as though the higher wage spoils the employee as an employee.

Friends without benefits

Robust packages, including 401(k) contributions, expensive medical insurance, high dental benefits, and endless vacation time, do not seem to factor into job-hopping over a rate. Lots of employees don't even understand the value of these benefits. They tend to care less and less about a benefit package and more and more about an hourly rate. The best thing we can do as employers is to set an above-average rate of pay, minimize the additional benefits we are giving, and simplify bonus structures, making the wages package easier for employees to understand and to track.

Value your team members and tell them they are valued by you.

What else can we do to retain whom we have and attract good talent?

The next best way to compete in this high-wage market is to create value in the "team" in the office. What you say, or don't say, matters. Value your team members and tell them they are valued by you. In theory this sounds simple, but this becomes much harder when you manage 5 or 10 (or 15 or 20) employees, including associate doctors, front desk people, assistants, and hygienists. You are the leader of the business and need to be



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The switch to Asprodental has been a game-changer for us! The all-in-one cloud based software has an incredibly intuitive user-interface, and it has allowed us to streamline our workflows and communication between the front and back office teams. On top of that, the relationship we have been able to develop with their highly responsive and supportive customer service team has been second-to-none. We treat our patients as family at our office, and Aspro has extended that same level of service to us.



DR. LINDSAY COSTANTINOUCLA School of Dentistry continuing lecturer, AACA member

Asprodental was designed by a dentist for dentists. I was able to cancel many subscription services (appointment reminders, texting, payment plan billing, anywhere access to our schedule, prescription orders, etc) and have all of these features easily accessible in one easy-to-use dental charting system. The software just makes sense and their service is top notch.



DR. ADRIANN HOOKSInvisalign Diamond level provider,
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\$4,680 VALUE aware of who is doing or not doing their job and who's picking on whom, on a day-to-day basis. And leading people is not where it ends; you also need to be prepared to have a random flood or compressor go down, while triaging and treating patients. Easy, right?

Loyalty needn't be obsolete

For a lot of us, valuing the team is what drops off first amid the chaos, and we miss valuing the team in a way that retains the team member. If your team culture and sense of "team" aren't there, then your team members have no reason beyond the wage to be there. It's just another 9-to-5 job that they can change for \$1 more per hour. The value that team members feel, and the feeling that they're a part of the family, is why they stay. In some instances, if the culture and value are strong, maybe they'll even stay for \$1 per hour less than what the doctor down the street is offering.

I strongly encourage all of you to start with finding the **Why** in the business. Have a team meeting to build a team mission statement together. Guide them to a vision of where your office is going and where you want to be 6 months, 1 year, and 5 years from now. Team members who are part of a mission are more likely to stay with you. If they feel you are accomplishing something as a team, they are more likely to stay with you. Include your team members in this team mission statement and make them feel that they are a part of something bigger.

Get creative, too! Hire for personality. Hire the kid in your practice who isn't going to college and doesn't know what his or her next move is in life. In most states you can train this person on the job. He or she can be your next assistant or front desk person. Build for the long term, and maybe this person will eventually become your next hygienist or your next associate. Treat them well and foster their growth. This could pay dividends in the long run.

The family that plays together

Take time for positivity sharing and team-building activities. Outside-the-office activities help build culture and relationships. Some examples are axe throwing (not one-onone), escape rooms, happy hours after work, fancy dinners or casual evenings (depending on your team), wine and paint nights, bead parties, cooking classes, renting out a movie theater, and/or attending sporting events as a team—Go Mariners! These are all fun, engaging team-building activities that allow teams to thrive together when they happen. We tend to do these activities during the holidays but forget about them the rest of the year. We get busy with our lives and don't make time for team activities.

If cost is a concern, there are ways to make a team activity cost effective, so you can do them more frequently. I used to work as an associate at an office where they had crafting and cooking parties. The owner doctor would pay for the craft activity, but all the team members pot lucked and brought food and beverages. You can pick an off-peak time for these activities too, which can cost less.

We can get creative and find ways to cut fat, but we can't always avoid expensive salaries. Still, the payroll challenge will eventually stabilize, and we all will be able to go back to not paying the extreme top of the market for employees. Eventually, there will be ample competition and candidates for positions, and we will have more choices for whom we want to hire. In the meantime, we need to be smarter in how we build our teams. The best part of this is that what we do now will make us stronger as teams and will make the time we spend in the office together more enjoyable. We will develop more as leaders and be stronger in the end.



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New Technologies

Enhancing Patient Experience Through Digital Dentistry

by Kamile Lim, DDS, and Nashwa Aziz Elrashidy, DDS

Abstract

This article explores the transformative impact of digital dentistry on diagnosis, treatment planning, and patient care. Intraoral scanning technology proves superior in comfort, accuracy, and efficiency compared to traditional methods. Digital work-ups and 3D imaging enable informed discussions between dentists and patients, fostering collaboration and



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Dr. Nashwa Aziz Elrashidy attended Michigan State University in 2006 and earned a BS in nutritional science. She then attended the University of Detroit Mercy School of Dentistry, where she graduated with honors in 2010. In 2011, she completed a General Practice Residency at Advocate

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reducing anxiety. Patient engagement and education are enhanced, leading to increased compliance. Clinical case studies emphasize improved treatment outcomes while underscoring the long-term cost-effectiveness of digital dentistry. The integration of artificial intelligence holds promise for further advancements. Embracing digital dentistry is essential for optimal care and positive patient experiences in the evolving landscape of oral health care.

The advent of digital dentistry has marked a paradigm shift in the way dental professionals approach diagnosis, treatment planning, and patient care. Traditional methods, involving physical impressions and conventional radiographs, are gradually being replaced by digital scans and work-ups, offering numerous benefits to both practitioners and patients and significantly transforming the patient experience.

Digital scans in dentistry

Intraoral scanning technology

Intraoral scanners have revolutionized the process of acquiring accurate digital impressions, eliminating the discomfort associated with traditional impression materials. The precision and speed of intraoral scans contribute to a more comfortable patient experience, fostering a positive perception of dental visits. In our own experience, digital scanning has set us apart from other practices as a cutting-edge, modern dental office.

A 2021 systematic review by Christopoulou et al.¹ demonstrated that intraoral scanners lead to more positive feelings regarding smell, taste, sound, vibration, nausea, and queasiness. Comfort assessment is mostly favorable compared to conventional techniques. Goff² (2016) emphasized that intraoral scanners improve data and information, eliminate poor impressions, and deliver excellent restorations to patients in a quicker, more comfortable fashion. For patients who present with a gag reflex, the scan has been helpful in capturing more accurate information.

Another scenario where we have seen the aid of the scanner is with patients who have bridges, as there is no fear of the impression locking in under the bridge. Digital scans can be used not only for making restorative procedures easier but also



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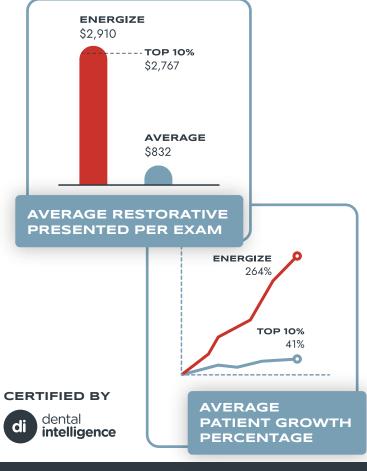
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for new-patient initial scans to establish a baseline record. The digital scanner provides a wow factor during the new-patient visit and allows the practitioner to use the scan as a teaching tool for the patient.

Building on this, a 2020 study by Rapone et al.³ found that intraoral scanning systems improve diagnostic efficacy, save time, reduce patient discomfort, and simplify clinical procedures. The study underscored the positive impact of intraoral scans on various aspects of dental practice, supporting the notion that digital scans significantly enhance the overall patient experience.

Accuracy and efficiency

Digital scans provide unparalleled accuracy in capturing intraoral details, reducing the likelihood of errors associated with conventional impressions. The efficiency of digital scanning not only saves chair time but also enhances the overall patient experience by minimizing discomfort and expediting the treatment planning process.

Supporting this, a 2022 study by Lo Giudice et al.⁴ showed that open-source software in intraoral scanners improves precision to $98.8\% \pm 1.4\%$, enhancing patient follow-up and prosthesis application in dental practice. This research reinforces the thesis by highlighting the precision achievable through digital scans, thus emphasizing their positive impact on patient care.

Digital work-ups and treatment planning

3D imaging and treatment simulation

Digital dentistry enables the creation of detailed 3D models of patients' oral structures, facilitating a comprehensive understanding of anatomical complexities. Treatment simulations, based on these digital work-ups, allow for a more informed discussion between the dentist and the patient, fostering a collaborative approach to treatment planning.

Improved communication

Digital work-ups serve as a visual aid in communicating treatment plans to patients. The ability to present 3D models and simulations enhances patient comprehension, promoting informed decision-making and reducing anxiety associated with uncertainty about proposed procedures.

Patient engagement and education

Digital dentistry provides a platform for interactive patient education, empowering individuals to actively participate in their oral health management. Through digital work-ups and educational software, patients gain a better understanding of their dental conditions and treatment options, leading to increased engagement and compliance.

Informed consent and shared decision-making

Digital scans and work-ups contribute to a transparent informed-consent process, as patients can visually comprehend the proposed treatments. Shared decision-making is facilitated, establishing a collaborative relationship between patients and dentists, which is fundamental to a positive patient experience.

Case studies and clinical outcomes

Clinical efficacy of digital dentistry

Many case studies point to the clinical efficacy of digital scans and work-ups in improving treatment outcomes. The precision afforded by digital technologies results in better-fitting restorations, increased longevity of prosthetic devices, and overall enhanced patient satisfaction.

Long-term benefits and cost-effectiveness

Digital dentistry, despite initial investment costs, proves to be cost-effective in the long run. The improved accuracy of digital scans reduces the need for remakes and adjustments, minimizing chair time and expenses associated with traditional techniques. The long-term benefits contribute to a positive economic aspect of the patient experience.

Challenges and future directions

Technological challenges

Despite the myriad advantages, digital dentistry faces technological challenges such as software compatibility issues, data security concerns, and the need for continuous updates. Addressing these challenges is crucial to maintaining the reliability and security of digital systems.

Integration of artificial intelligence

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) in digital dentistry holds promising prospects for further improving patient experiences. Al algorithms can enhance diagnostic accuracy, streamline treatment planning, and personalize patient care, marking the next frontier in the evolution of digital dentistry.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the integration of digital scans and work-ups in dentistry represents a transformative leap toward enhancing the patient experience. From improved diagnostic accuracy to enhanced patient education and engagement, digital dentistry offers a comprehensive solution to the challenges of traditional practices. As technology continues to evolve, it is imperative for dental professionals to embrace these advancements to provide optimal care and foster positive patient experiences. This academic exploration contributes to the ongoing dialogue surrounding the role of digital dentistry in shaping the future of oral health care.

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Jack's Corner

by Jack Von Bulow, DDS

Small Happenings

So I remember being young **and** looking forward to *60 Minutes* every Sunday night at 7 pm, right after NFL football (except on the West Coast). And I can't say I don't appreciate the chance to show off my looong-term memory. I'm 100% sure I was/remain nerdy enough to relish Mike Wallace grilling the likes of the Ayatollah, Nixon, Putin, and a few more. If Wallace were still a part of the *60 Minutes* team, I'm sure I'd be fantasizing Mike interrogating USC football's all-too-present "Defensive Coordinator" as well as any/all perpetrators of do-it-yourself dentistry.

Thing is, consistently, my favorite part of the show arrived near the end of the hour when old-school curmudgeon Andy Rooney would share some interesting and frequently irreverent thoughts. To this day, I still love Andy Rooney quotes, stuff like "The average dog is a nicer person than the average person," or "I don't know anything offhand that mystifies Americans more than the cotton they put in pill bottles," or the 50-50-90 Rule: "Any time you have a 50-50 chance of getting something right, there's a 90% probability you'll get it wrong."

Imaginary friend

The Andy Rooney worship got to the point where I'd do imaginary interviews with Andy across the street from my office at El Pollo Loco and publish the pieces for local newspapers. I interviewed Rooney regarding Coach Pete Carroll, Clint Eastwood interviewing a chair at the Republican convention, former USC Athletic Director Mike Garrett, and former President Donald J. Trump. And it's awesome interviewing someone you admire about people you really like (or not) when you get to create the questions **and** the answers. And there are some fond memories of cashier La Polla Loca attempting to force senior discounts on me and my Pollo Bowl when I wasn't even close to being old enough to qualify.

These days, I search for quotes Monday through Friday. I started the quote thing back when our dental practice first returned from being closed by COVID-19 health precautions. I first used the quotes to get me out of my own 4 am negative, pessimistic way. Then, during our morning huddle, I noticed I was suddenly surrounded by zombies, so I made the huddle a play-for-pay

money game. With liberal use of clues, one team member was gonna win 10 bucks. If the 24-second clock expired, the 10 bucks would roll over. I saw energy levels soar. Since I was surrounded by youngsters who maybe had been forced to watch 60 Minutes when they were little, just as I'd been forced to watch Lawrence Welk on Saturday nights, my team began to transform into 60 Minutes/Andy Rooney old souls.

"Tve learned that it's those small daily happenings that make life so spectacular."

Eager to serve

Somehow, I became a board member for the most productive Invisalign providing group on the globe, the American Academy of Clear Aligners (AACA). When the organization outgrew our original board status for presidents of individual subgroups, we former presidents were asked for our functional grounds for continued board standing. As time went on, I volunteered to help with the journal and write a quarterly commentary...and supply daily quotes. Eventually I augmented the quotes with my video commentary on them (view at your own risk).

Today's quote came straight outta my Andy Rooney library. The quote: "I've learned that it's those small daily happenings that make life so spectacular." And what I've learned from experience was once again confirmed by Rooney's wisdom. Since I sold my dental practice a year or so ago, one of those small daily happenings now consumes around 2½ hours of my life, and love, per day. And there are some little silly things, like high-fiving my authentic Ranch Cucamonga Quakes bobblehead version of mascot dinosaur Tremor after flipping a "Be Badass" coin given to me by a 3-year-old, just before taking my blood pressure every morning. But there's more.

So, anyone who's ever seen my organic chemistry lab notebook, or the top of my dental school mobile cabinet, wouldn't be shocked when I confess that being organized hasn't historically

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been one of my strengths. But when I'm not being delusional or over-the-top creative, at least reality hasn't totally left my room (especially after I invested thousands asking for stuff like coaching and 360-degree reviews—okay, counseling would've helped too).

Catching the worm

I would arrive at work 2 hours early every morning. And yeah, I loved the peace and quiet. And I appreciated my clear conscience when the morning huddle arrived and I'd made every effort to avoid surprises...for my team, the patients, and me.

But driving in early, having already recited my litany of things I'm grateful for, I couldn't ignore the beauty of what I saw while gliding down California Avenue just west of Cal Tech. I saw

people walking, reading, engaging, and having a cup of coffee. I dreamed that one day, I could pledge that club unopposed.

When family, friends, patients, or colleagues used to tell me they were busier now than ever before, my thoughts would go to Pinocchio, sodium pentothal, and the former president. But now I know and agree.

These days, half of my morning is non-negotiable. Some may think that walking out into the dark of morning, being greeted by name, having a Havana Cappuccino, and cracking open an Italian mystery novel, and then taking a circuitous hike back through a neighborhood you'd drive through just to get a glimpse when you were a kid, doesn't sound that special. All I got is something else it took a while for me to learn. Don't know about Andy on this one, but I'll just agree to disagree.







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Wednesday 8th: Travel Thursday 9th: 8 am-5 pm Friday 10th: 8 am-4 pm



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