Immediate dentures: Are you missing out?

Author: Dr Craig Callen, USA

All of the courses advertised today tout the productivity of porcelain facings, orthodontics, automated root canal and implants. While any of these treatments can be rewarding and profitable, the often-overlooked area of treatment that is highly rewarding and profitable is that of removable prosthetics. Yes, I said it, dentures! Many of us became burnt out on making dentures in dental school and never recovered, but times have changed. Not only is there a huge untapped market for high-quality dentures as the population ages, but it can also be one of the most rewarding and profitable procedures you provide for your patients per hour.

In addition, with the materials available to you today, this can be a relatively easy treatment. A lot of what we know about cosmetic dentistry came from prosthodontics. Full denture treatment used to be the ultimate in cosmetic dentistry before periodontal care changed the way dentists practice.

Prosthodontists were really the first dentists to study things such as facial proportions as related to tooth size and shape.

How to get denture patients

Our office offers a Free Aesthetic Denture Consult. This allows patients to meet us and see what we can do for them in a non-threatening environment. If a patient calls in requesting fees, they are offered the option of the free consult. The patient is scheduled for a 10-minute time block with a doctor in the consultation room. He or she fills out a short form that pertains strictly to dentures. Then the patient is given a printout that describes his or her denture options and procedures. We also show the patient pictures of our cases and how natural they look.

We just had two large discount denture centres move into our area (and they tend to be more bait-and-switch than discount centres). We not only had to compete, but also differentiate our office by showing that we provide high quality, aesthetic dentures, not cheap ones.

Most of our dentures are set with Dentsply’s Portrait IPN denture teeth, which look amazingly natural. We run a small advertisement in the local paper promoting aesthetically pleasing dentures. In addition, we belong to www.denturewearers.com, which is a great online informational site for denture patients.
and will help drive them toward your own Web site and office looking for solutions (Fig. 2).

**Technique appointment No. 1**

Randy is a typical patient who came in for a free consultation for immediate maxillary and mandibular dentures. He had been told a long time ago that he had severe periodontal disease and that his teeth could not be saved. A busy contractor, he put off treatment for years. We were able to appoint him for a complete examination and X-ray films, which verified his story.

Financial arrangements were made and we set-up an appointment for impressions, shade and bite (Fig. 3). At the next appointment, we took about an hour to get nice impressions with the Accudent dual alginate system with stock trays.

If Randy had been edentulous, we would have used Accudent’s anatomically corrected denture trays. This utilises a light and heavy body alginate mixed in an alginator. The light body sets slower and is applied in a large syringe. Because Randy still had teeth to establish vertical and tooth position, we then took a bite with Discus Dental’s Vanilla Mousse, but you can, of course, use your material of choice. If there are many missing teeth, you may also use Discus Dental’s Impression Putty for a bite.

The shade was chosen using the Dentsply Portrait Shade Guide. As most people want to bleach their teeth, we see more and more patients choosing lighter coloured teeth. We take several clinical and portrait photos for our records and the lab’s use in setting the case.

If the patient wants to change his or her smile, we use The Smile Style Guide, written by Dr Lorin Berland and Dr David L. Taub to pick a new smile (www.Digident.com; +1 800 741 7966). It is a great tool that contains a multitude of different smiles progressing from square, pointed, round and flat as well as various length combinations that we include with detailed notes for the lab about exactly what we and the patient want.
Because Randy did not need to have posterior teeth removed and prolonged healing time, we progressed right to a wax try-in appointment in two weeks. I do a split set-up to verify the bite and show the patient the set-up. Randy, and his wife, approved the set-up and the aesthetics and we scheduled the surgical appointment in another two weeks. The case is then sent to the lab for proper festooning and life-like base material processing.

**Technique appointment No. 3**

Fourteen periodontally involved teeth were removed with local anaesthetic and nitrous oxide and the dentures seated. I relined them with a temporary soft liner to aid in the fit (Fig. 5). We use a cartridge-based system, such as VOCO's UFI Gel SC. When Randy and his wife saw his new smile, they both cried (in a good way) (Fig. 1). She immediately scheduled herself for an appointment for dentures too. In six months we will provide relines.

**Technique appointment No. 4**

Randy was back the next day with minimal concerns. I will generally see the patient on the first adjustment, and then delegate the simple adjustments to my well-trained, experienced staff.

My total chair time with the free consultation, examination, impressions, try-ins, extractions and seating and the first healing check was about 2.5 hours. My per hour production was higher than what I make on a typical crown and bridge case, and I provided a life-changing treatment for a patient who was a dental cripple. If the patient has trouble wearing dentures, we can proceed to implants to help in retention. One of the keys to providing quality denture care for your patients is to find a laboratory that also is interested in quality. You will pay top dollar, but it will be well worth it.

If you are not providing denture treatment in your practice and you have holes in your schedule, you should think again about this under served area of cosmetic dentistry. As baby boomers age and lose teeth, there will be a real need for quality denture care.