Using imagination, techniques and skill

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A patient is reaching out for your expertise by presenting his dental problems as seen in Fig. 1. Where does the practitioner begin?

Imagine the ending before you begin. Listen to the patient’s desires before you start. What might be the factors influencing the desires and the goals for that patient to ask for guidance for esthetic oral improvement? What are the influencing factors affecting the practitioner to achieve the desired goals? Does the practitioner have the technical practicalities or even the correct information about techniques utilized today?

In this particular patient, in this specific area, when did the patient realize the need for improvement? How long did the area in question appear as it does? How does the patient hope the final result might appear? Does the area cause the patient any pain or annoyance?

The practitioner must consider what possible techniques he knows to achieve health plus esthetic appearance plus function. Esthetic desires differ with culture, socioeconomic factors and social pressures, to name a few. Of course, expertise helps!

The patient described in this article was referred to my office for esthetics. He was concerned about the appearance of the upper left anterior and, especially, how to consider options available to correct a very obvious abraded UL cuspid recession. The patient felt that it made him feel old (long in the tooth) and afraid of its physical longevity. The tooth was not sensitive to temperature changes.

Some possible thoughts to correct the area were brought out by a previous dentist. These were to crown the cuspid and change the ceramic coloring at the gingival level to appear pinkish, as possible gingival, which would take away the pressure of a long, white appearance. Even though the patient was getting married shortly, I told him this option would not be good enough because the tooth would not appear natural enough.

In previous cases I have published in a series titled “Barriers of success,” I described the utilization of the Guided Tissue Regeneration (GTR) techniques. In this series, I utilized several different types of barrier materials to regenerate connective tissue attaching to a previously exposed root surface. This resulted in a healthy, physiologic and cosmetic improvement.

With the use of a barrier, true reattachment resulted, as compared to other techniques of root coverage that resulted in a long junctional epithelium adherence and not a true reattachment. The initial tissue image might appear fine, but recession would reoccur. If a crown were to be placed on a re-adhered area, margins of the crown would be vulnerable to exposure visually with root recession reoccurring.

The barrier utilized in this GTR technique is a connective tissue membrane. It is a sterilized membrane, unlike popular nonsterilized membranes. The membrane utilized in this treatment was a Transzgraft (Integuply) type.

After the root coverage GTR technique was done initially to his #11, the patient was so favorably surprised his labial recession could be covered that he requested his maxillary central #9, which also had some recession, might be covered as well. I agreed and did it with this GTR technique. The patient was participating and very appreciative. He was more aware now of the visage and physical possibilities than he had before commencing and is now participating in his esthetic treatments, knowing the wide range of possibilities.

Temporary restorative coverage after the healing of the periodontic procedures permits the patient and the restorative dentist to physically see the achievements and how to improve toward the desired goal. The interproximal areas need more time to heal initially and be maintained. After the proper time, the final prosthesis is fabricated and inserted.

The patient is now a believer and aware of the possibilities of results. He is now aware of oral esthetic possibilities and goals. While reading magazines, he now looks at photos of different smiles and the esthetic possibilities they contain. He has referred his mother and his new bride to my office to get the best possible oral esthetic and healthy smile.

Different achievements can be gotten only when honest and true techniques are utilized. A team of dentists with expertise in different phases, working together, encouraging input with the patient, can make the difference and a smile.