Learning Curve

With more than 4,500 new cases opened every year there is a wealth of experience within Dental Protection from which all of us can learn

In a world where most things we purchase are ready-made rather than bespoke, we are protected by a money-back return policy in case we don’t like something after we’ve paid for it. However, dentists spend the majority of their time creating custom-made items which makes such an approach expensive and best avoided if possible.

Consider the case of a young male patient in his early twenties who requested his dentist to close his midline diastema. The patient was soon to be married and wanted the work done before the wedding day. It was quite a large gap of some 4mm between the upper central incisors, but the dentist confidently assured the young man that he could close the gap and produce ‘a perfect smile’ ready for the wedding photos.

When the patient returned for the preparation to be done, he asked the dentist to prepare the two lateral incisors as well as the centrals. This was duly done and an impression was taken before the patient rebooked to return a week later.

At the fitting appointment, the two central veneers were tried in. The patient agreed they looked fine and he was pleased with the way they closed the diastema. To save time, the dentist did not try in the two other veneers and went ahead and cemented all four of them. When he now looked in the mirror, the patient was surprised at the result and not at all happy with the size of the central incisors. He also felt the veneers were quite bulky under his lip. The dentist reassured him and asked him to try them for a couple of weeks.

A tricky situation

The patient phoned the next day saying that both he and his fiancée were very upset with the result and that the teeth were now far too prominent. With the wedding taking place in less than a fortnight the dentist agreed to replace them at his own cost. The patient had lost confidence in the dentist by now and instead went to another dentist who replaced the veneers for a considerably higher fee, which the patient now demanded from the original dentist.

Whenever aesthetics are involved in dentistry, it is wise to obtain the patient’s consent on the complete final appearance before finishing the case, particularly if it will be difficult or expensive to redo the treatment once it has been cemented or bonded in place.

Look out for another Learning Curve feature from Dental Protection in future editions of Dental Tribune UK.