COMMUNICATING WITH THE DENTAL LABORATORY

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**OBJECTIVES**

- Choose the right lab for your needs
- Meet the lab owner and staff
- Discover value-added laboratory benefits
- Communicate your needs
- Utilize the laboratory prescription completely
- Understand lab case turn-around times and remake policy
- Review the fee schedule
- Understand payment policy
Laboratory Q.A. /Communication concerns of lab technicians

- Lack of recognition by the dental team
- Lack of effective communication in the lab prescription
- Lack of knowledge by the dentist of technical procedures
- Lists of most common errors by student year
- “Lab Q.A. in the Department of Restorative Dentistry at the Univ. of Illinois at Chicago, College of Dentistry”
Top 5 Reasons Why Dentists Change Laboratories

- Inconsistent quality/technical problems: 66%
- Prices were higher than they wanted to pay: 26%
- Delayed turnaround time: 25%
- Poor relationship/poor communication: 22%
- Prescriptions not being thoroughly or carefully read and filled: 16%

SOURCE: LMT Research Dept. ©2013
Most Important Features Dentists Look for When Choosing a Laboratory

- High quality work: 95%
- Good communication: 53%
- Reasonable prices: 52%
- Easy interpersonal relationship: 35%
- Fast turnaround time: 26%
- Proximity of the lab to office: 18%
- Range of services: 18%
- Offers cutting-edge technology: 13%
- Lab’s reputation: 7%
- Specializes in a restoration: 6%
- Offers educational programs: 3%

SOURCE: LMT Research Dept. ©2013
Laboratory choices

- Referrals from colleagues and specialists
- [www.nadl.org](http://www.nadl.org) National Association of Dental Laboratories
- Dental laboratory publications: JDT, LMT
- State dental board
- ADA
Laboratory on-site visit

- Make an appointment with the owner
- Tour the facility(ies), technology used, CAD/CAM?
- Talk with and observe the technical staff
- Ask who specifically will be doing your work
- Discover the number and type of CDT’s in that lab
- Does the lab outsource? Where?
- Observe cleanliness and infection control
- Review the laboratory’s quality assurance process—look at samples of their work!
Laboratory value-added benefits

- Custom shade determination service
- Continuing education offered
- Consultation at your office, if necessary
- Remote consultative services: treatment planning, material selections, technical guidance
- Training for your support staff
97% of Dentists Want Your Technical Advice; Here are the Hot Topics:

- Material options: 67%
- Restoration choices: 62%
- Shade-taking techniques: 47%
- Preparation techniques: 43%
- Impression-taking techniques: 36%
- New digital technologies: 31%

SOURCE: LMT Research Dept. ©2013
Communicate your needs

- Types of prosthetic restorative support you need, i.e. Fixed, Removable, Acrylic, CAD/CAM
- Shipping requirements
- Desired lab case turn-around time
- Technical support
- Materials available-specific information
- Continuing education
Utilizing the laboratory prescription

- Fully communicate the desired result
- Use all types of communication tools, i.e. writing, diagrams, photos, designed casts, shade sources/objects
Lab prescription contents

- Name, age, gender, occupation, lifestyle
- Date of request
- Detailed description of the desired prosthesis
- Specific materials/chemical composition to be used, i.e. metal, acrylic, ceramic
- Shade (number and specific guide)–diagram, photo, former restoration
- Desired occlusion–accurate casts, interocclusal record, articulator settings
Lab prescription

- Compose it yourself
- Reread the final draft and opt to have someone else read it for clarity
- Present clear and concise instructions
- Submit neat/clean case components to the laboratory
Turn-around times (TAT)

- Inform the lab of the TAT you desire
- Will the lab’s TAT be consistent?
- Can the lab meet those times, at what cost to you?
- Will the lab outsource any of your work?
- Who pays the shipping? Overnight or longer?
Remake policy

- Review the laboratory’s quality assurance process
- Inform the lab concerning your office Q.A. process
- How will you both communicate if quality concerns arise?
- What is the laboratory’s remake policy—considering a lab error or a case submission error ($$ responsibility)
Laboratory fee schedule

- Understand the material options available for each type of prosthesis
- Understand additional charges to a stated fee, i.e. denture teeth, type of precious metal, number of RPD clasps
- Reference the publication for fee comparisons, Laboratory Management Today [www.lmtmag.com](http://www.lmtmag.com)
- Consult with colleagues
Payment policy

- What does the lab expect from its customers?
- Payment plans/options
- Credit policy, credit card use
- Late payment charges
- How will you incorporate laboratory charges into your patient billing plan?