Clinical dental technicians

Jon Davey, owner of The Berkshire Dental Laboratory explains the role

Having been a dental technician for a number of years I recently qualified as a clinical dental technician and thought I would share some of my experiences along the way.

Firstly, what is the difference between a dental technician and a clinical dental technician?

Well the explanation given by The British Association of Clinical Dental Technology is as follows:

- Dental technicians are highly skilled professionals, but are not registered to provide dentures to members of the public or work independently in a clinic.
- Clinical dental technicians offer patients direct treatment for the construction, repairing and fitting of removable dental appliances.

Further information can be found on the website www.dentureprofessionals.org.

Clinical dental technician qualifications

I recently attended a masterclass in removable prosthodontics with a well-respected dentist who works at St George's Hospital, London, as well as in private practice. It was a good lecture from an extremely knowledgeable man but as the session concluded with the usual Q&A section it became apparent that he hadn't realised his audience could really add value to his business. By working with the individuals attending his lecture he could save time and money.

The audience was made up of clinical dental technicians and the masterclass was an invitation-only event for the first and second cohort of the new diploma in clinical dental technology. These were professionals, who specialise in dentures and have fewer overheads, who would therefore charge a lower hourly rate than a dental surgery.

If you haven't heard of this qualification yet don't be too surprised. Amazingly, until the Kent Surrey and Sussex (KSS) Deanery developed the diploma there wasn't a recognised qualification for dental technicians. Prior to this being launched, dental technicians needed no formal qualifications to operate a denture laboratory. This had obvious legal implications and gave little protection for unknowing patients, so I am sure I am not alone in being grateful that at long last there is a formal qualification recognised by the General Dental Council.

How CDTs work

We often see patients who haven't seen a dentist for a while, so CDTs help get them back into the dental loop. Most of the partial dentures we make are for people who regularly attend the dentist. They come to us if their dentist doesn't make dentures, or they couldn't get an appointment when they wanted one. Sometimes dentists only offer an NHS option and quite often the dentist has referred the patient.

When a patient comes into the lab and they are dentate or have implants, we need them to have seen a dentist in the past 12 months or to see a dentist before any treatment begins. If the patient already has a dentist we require a treatment plan. The majority of our work at The Berkshire Dental Laboratory is where patients request a new denture to replace their own dentures that maybe aren't fitting as well as they could and have become uncomfortable.

Often a simple treatment plan such as partial denture is all that is required. Some cases can be more complex for example where there are teeth that are vulnerable and we are unable to use a clasp or we need to make provision for teeth that may be extracted at a later date. Even if the patient's oral hygiene may benefit from an open chrome framework then the treatment plan would need to be more specific.

Jon Davey, owner of The Berkshire Dental Laboratory explains the role

I have some long standing relationships with dentist clients and together we make really good dentures because we understand how each other work.

Jon Davey is the owner of The Berkshire Dental Laboratory and has worked with dentures for over 30 years. He started out as an apprentice in a dental laboratory 20 years ago and is now fully qualified with a diploma in clinical dental technology from the Royal College Surgeons in England. The Berkshire Dental Laboratory has been specialising in making dentures in the local area for over 30 years. More information can be found at www.berkshiredentallaboratory.co.uk.

If you have any questions, Jon would be pleased to answer them and can be contacted on 0118 958 2226 or info@berkshiredentallaboratory.co.uk. Use this link to find your local CDT list: www.cdtalumni.com.