

Dr. Shannon's article has clearly demonstrated the steps to delivering a bonded ceramic onlay, one of the new workhorses in many esthetic practices. Although a single onlay may not be quite as exciting as a full veneer case, the ability to place one well is just as important.

### BONDED RESTORATIONS

As I lecture around the United States, I talk with many dentists who truly love practicing esthetic dentistry but wish there were more veneer cases to do. I look at our practice numbers and realize that 75% of our esthetic production is on posterior teeth, not anterior teeth! Although many dentists would love to do a veneer case or two per day, the reality is that most of our esthetic dentistry comes in the form of bonded restorations, such as the one illustrated by Dr. Shannon.

Presenting bonded restorations to patients is fairly straightforward. As Dr. Shannon mentions in the article, there are certain clinical conditions that call for the use of an alternate material, such as gold. We typically will present both options to the patient (gold or porcelain), explaining the advantages and disadvantages, and let them decide.

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### Gold

We have found that the patients who value longevity over everything else almost always select gold. These are the people who want their dentistry to have the best chance of lasting a lifetime and for whom esthetics isn't a primary concern. If these same patients were having anterior teeth restored with bonded restorations, I doubt they would request gold veneers, but when it comes to showing a little gold on a first or second molar, they accept that trade-off in exchange for the durability of gold.

### Porcelain

I am still surprised by how many middle-age men, when given the choice, opt for the tooth-colored restoration instead of the gold. At least once a week, a patient will ask me to remove a highly visible gold restoration that has been bothering them for years. In other words, placing a certain restoration based on your values and not the patient's could result in an unhappy patient.

### Advantages

The significant advantage of presenting bonded restorations, such as onlays, to patients is the conservative nature of the preparations when compared to conventional crowns. When told they need a crown, many patients reply that they don't want to have their whole tooth ground down to a nub. And as misguided and uninformed as that statement is, the nugget of truth in it is simply this: Why are you grinding my whole tooth down just to replace the broken mesiolingual cusp and adjacent occlusal amalgam? It is the same reason so many patients have resisted

having conventional three-unit bridges done to replace missing teeth.

### The "Conservative Crown"

We now tell patients that there is actually some good news about their broken tooth. The good news is that a "conservative crown" can restore their tooth. The difference between a conservative crown and a typical crown is that, with the conservative crown, we don't have to grind your whole tooth down to a nub like we used to in the past. Now, we simply remove what is left of the old silver filling, remove any decay, and blend it in with the part that you broke off of the tooth. We call it a conservative crown because we don't grind down the entire tooth and because we preserve all the healthy parts of the tooth.

### Fees

The fee for a procedure like this bonded onlay should be fairly close to that of a conventional crown. Although the prep appointment may be slightly easier for the conservative crown, bonding it in is definitely more time-consuming than conventional cementation.

In reality, our fees should reflect the amount of time we spend and the degree of difficulty for a certain procedure. We shouldn't base fees on how many enamel rods we remove. More conservative restorations, such as veneers, are often more time-consuming and more difficult than less-conservative alternatives (eg, a porcelain-fused-to-metal), yet nearly all offices charge less for the veneer than for the crown.

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### CONCLUSION

Don't forget: The best time to create value for a patient is at the cementation appointment, especially with a posterior tooth. Take the time to show the finished restoration to the patient with your camera, or even a mirror, so they can see how well their new restoration blends in. Even if the shade is off by six or seven shades, it still impresses the patient how much better it looks than all of the other black restorations in their mouth. This is also the perfect time to point out to the patient, or to let them help make the decision about, which teeth will be treated next. Since we started using our cameras to show "afters" as well as the "befores", acceptance of our complete-case dentistry has nearly doubled! ■



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