

The “Complete Examination”

Dr. Louis Malcmacher



Generally, when dentists read a title like the one above about a complete examination, they start thinking along the lines of a comprehensive examination, oral cancer screening, two bitewings, a full mouth series or panorex, diagnostic casts, articulators, periodontal charting, complete medical history and temporomandibular joint examination. Truth be told, if I read

another article like the one I just described telling me how to do a complete examination on a patient, I think I'm going to be sick. I've sat through full day courses on doing a complete examination, which taught me nothing more than I learned in dental school.

I am going to talk about a different kind of complete examination. This complete examination occurs every minute of every day in your dental office. This is a complete examination that I think every dentist needs to know about and needs to prepare for. I am talking about the complete examination that the patient gives you every second that they are in your office. Doctor, you and your staff are being examined completely by pairs of eyes and you are being scrutinized by the people who pay you. This is a complete exami-

nation that you have to pass in order to have a successful dental office in the year 2009.

What are your patients looking for while they are doing their complete examination of you? Certainly, it goes without saying that they are looking for quality dentistry in a safe, sterile environment. That line, by the way, I have seen in many dental offices' mission statement. Don't you think that most patients take that for granted? I am sure that patients are not looking for a dirty dental office that reuses its anesthetic needles. The question is, what are patients looking for beyond the basic dental office and what are they judging you on?

The number one thing the patient is examining is how are you going to treat THEM. They want to know how are you going to treat them as an individual person, not as just a mouth. Let me ask you a simple question that needs to be answered by you and every staff member in the office – when you come to the office, are you more concerned about you or are you more concerned about the patients? If the answer is you, then you have just failed the examination and patients can see right through it. I teach this to my audiences all the time – the dental office is about the patient, not about you. In this day and age, when estimates range that 50% of dentistry is elective esthetic treatment (based on dollars), you better be much more focused on what the patient wants than on what you want. If you are giving every patient that walks in the door a cookie cutter full mouth reconstruction worth \$60,000, then they know that it is not about them, they know that it is about you.

There is so much talk about the dental office being like Nordstrom's or the Ritz Carlton. Let me make this as simple as I can – you are



not Nordstrom's or the Ritz Carlton! You will never be like Nordstrom's or the Ritz Carlton. I don't remember the last time I walked into a Ritz Carlton and heard dental drills whirring and cavitrons squealing. You can treat everyone who walks into your office like they do at Nordstrom's - that is as a real individual with real individual needs. You listen and cater to their needs and wants before you even go ahead and recommend any kind of treatment.

Here is the second part of the examination that you must pass as well. Is your office a state of the art dental office? For a dentist, the words "state of

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the art" means having every latest gadget and toy with bells and whistles flying everywhere. Easily, tomorrow you could go to a dental show like the Chicago Midwinter Meeting or the Greater New York Dental Meeting and spend a million dollars on everything from the latest in digital radiography to an in-office CT scan. That may be state of the art to you but is not necessarily being state of the art to your patients. State of the art dentistry to your patients means that you have techniques or technology that will give them what they want. What is it that patients want? They want minimally invasive, relatively painless, injection free (when possible) dentistry. Patients relate to what is state of the art by what they read and see in consumer magazines.

The three most popular state of the art techniques patients relate to now are one-hour whitening, lasers, and minimally invasive porcelain veneers like Cristal® Veneers from Aurum Ceramic. You can-

not pick up a consumer article about dental esthetics without reading about in office one-hour whitening. Whether they need it or not, a patient walks into your office and, if you do one-hour whitening, you are a state of the art dentist.

I think from a practice management and a clinical point of view, it is time to get a Powerlase AT hard and soft tissue dental laser by Lares Research into your offices. More than any other piece of technology we have ever invested in, the laser impresses patients the most! Why is that? The answer is because when they go to the dermatologist, he's using a laser. When they go to the optomologist, she is using a laser. When they walk into a dental office, we're using a high-speed drill, that one that patients remember from their youth and you are then an old fashioned dentist. I call this the James Bond experience. People really get turned on to lasers because they see lasers everywhere. The medical professionals have it, James Bond fights the bad guys with a laser, lasers are used as the latest technology in manufacturing and with so many other things that consumers see all of the time. When they finally see a laser in your office, you are a state of the art dentist in their eyes and have passed their complete examination.

Cristal® Veneers by Aurum Ceramic are the perfect example of the state of the art techniques I am talking about. When a patient comes in and asks for minimally invasive veneers because they require no or minimal preparation and are relatively painless — if you don't offer them, then you are just another dentist that hurts people in their eyes. Even if a patient walks into your office and they don't want veneers, when they see that you offer no or minimally invasive veneers, they immediately recognize that you are a "state of the art" dentist and practice conservative dentistry. You've shown that you are committed to minimally invasive dentistry and that you really care about patients.

Botox and dermal filler therapy is a new growth area for dentists to get into. These are minimally facial injectable esthetic treatments that are highly desirable by patients, easily administered, and these treatments when done by dentists

can complete an esthetic dental case. Many provinces and states allow dentists to administer these treatments after they have had adequate training. I have trained hundreds of dentists and they are the easiest healthcare professionals to train because of our intimate knowledge of the oral and maxillofacial areas, dentists are the best injectors, and we know facial esthetics. There is no question that the next horizon for esthetic dentistry is outside the mouth to complement the beautiful, minimally invasive Cristal® veneers that we provide inside the mouth.

The next time any patient walks into your office, remember that you are not the only one giving an examination. Patients are looking at you, constantly evaluating you, your team and the entirety of your office to see if it is the appropriate choice for where they want to get their dental treatment. They are constantly interviewing you and using their eyes as their own diagnostic tools to see what kind of dental office you really have. State of the art techniques that patients care about like those mentioned above will help you get an A+ on your next exam. Good luck!

Dr. Louis Malcmacher is a practicing general dentist in Bay Village, Ohio and an internationally known lecturer, author, and dental consultant known for his comprehensive and entertaining style. An evaluator for Clinicians Reports (formerly Clinical Research Associates), Dr. Malcmacher has served as a spokesman for the AGD and is a consultant to the Council on Dental Practice of the American Dental Association. He works closely with dental manufacturers as a clinical researcher in developing new products and techniques. For close to three decades, Dr. Malcmacher has inspired his audiences and consulting clients to truly enjoy doing dentistry by providing the knowledge necessary for excellent clinical and practice management. His group dental practice has maintained a 45% overhead since 1988. You can contact him at 440 892-1810 or email dryowza@mail.com.

You can also see his lecture schedule at www.commonensedentistry.com where you can find information about his botulinum toxin and dermal filler training, building the best dental team ever, big case acceptance success! and sign up for his affordable monthly consulting programs, teleconferences, audio cd's and free monthly e-newsletter.