The Use of Smile Libraries for Cosmetic Dentistry

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It’s easier than ever to give cosmetic patients what they want. The hard part is determining what they want. Patients seeking your solutions to their cosmetic cases have specific concerns they can’t articulate. There are of course indisputable aspects to a beautiful, healthy smile, straight, white, stain-free teeth. However, personal preferences concerning the combinations of tooth shape, length, and the degree of whiteness or translucency can vary greatly. The patient, the dentist, and the ceramist must all know where they are going before they ever begin cosmetic or appearance related dentistry. Every form of visual communication from digital photographs, smile libraries to cosmetic imaging is tremendous help. After all, cosmetic dentistry is a visual and functional art.

**Smile Libraries and Cosmetic Imaging**

To build a cosmetic practice, we must be able to communicate with our patients the merits and value of elective, cosmetic dental enhancements. Diagnostic wax-ups are critical to the technical aspects of a case, but they can often be too abstract for most patients to understand. “Before and after” pictures of your best cosmetic cases will always help during case presentation. But in my experience, nothing beats giving your patients an idea of what you can actually do for them. For this, the Lorin Library Smile Style Guide (Fig. 1) is useful to illustrate the many options available in cosmetic dentistry. Certain smiles may be chosen more, but each individual patient will have the pleasure of choosing what’s best for himself. Patients serious about cosmetic dentistry can have very distinct preferences of which shape, length and color is aesthetically pleasing. Properly presented, smile libraries can help you guide your patient through the smile selection process.

**Cosmetic Imaging**

The Lorin Library Smile Style Guide and its CD of 72 digital images provide the true 18 esthetic options for the doctor and patient when contemplating a smile makeover (Fig. 2). In addition, the Lorin Library Smile Style Guide illustrates the four choices of incisal length in relation to the cuspsids (Figs. 3a–d). Profile views of each smile style gives the patient the most complete and thorough selection available. This will help them narrow down their selection (Fig. 4).

With computerized cosmetic imaging, we can take this smile selection process one step further. Using a digital full face portrait, we can show the patients how they would look with different treatment options, including the number of teeth, different smile styles, and different lengths. These “before and after” computerized simulations can be displayed in the treatment room on the computer monitor, or printed out on photo quality paper for the patient to take home and discuss with friends and family. The cosmetic image helps create the excitement and desire that can encourage case acceptance. By showing the possibilities that dentistry can provide for your patients, you may help create the “want”!

**Cosmetic Imaging and Laboratory Communication**

After treatment is accepted, the cosmetic image continues to play an integral role in communication between the doctor, the patient, and the laboratory. The goal, after all, is to recreate that computer enhanced smile as close as possible. Communication at every step helps ensure that we do the right thing the first time.

After taking pre-op impressions and pouring up the stone models, the laboratory re-shapes, straightens, and builds out the teeth as detailed by the cosmetic images. This image-inspired diagnostic wax-up is then duplicated in stone for fabrication of the provisional putty matrix. The putty matrix allows fabrication of his-acrylic temporaries in the mouth that match the shape, length, and contours chosen by the dentist.
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Case #2
A good illustration of this point lies with another great lady in the practice. This patient chose ten porcelain restorations with Smile Design #82 (square centrales/square round laterals/round cuspidys) to replace unattractive anterior PFM restorations that exhibited opaque, mismatched colors and black metal margins. Again, cosmetic imaging inspired case acceptance and facilitated laboratory communication to arrive at a successful outcome (Figs. 10–14).

The resulting smile met all of the patient’s expectations in shape, length, and color (Fig. 6 & 7). Furthermore, cuspid function was restored with the porcelain restorations, subsequently curing her bruxing habit and reducing the periodontal pockets. Not only did she have the dream smile she always wanted, we successfully eliminated her headaches and the need to wear a bulky occlusal guard every night!

The previous case illustrates the extreme importance of a smile library and cosmetic imaging can play in creating a particular patient’s specific dream smile. With cosmetic makeovers, it is imperative to realize that even on the exact same day, with the same consulting dentist, using the same laboratory, two patients with similar characteristics such as age and gender may choose two smiles completely different in shape, length, and color. And although the resulting smile makeovers may be equally attractive, patient satisfaction is only possible if the right smile is chosen for that particular patient.

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Case #5

For the next patient, imaging showed how cosmetic dentistry could give this gentleman the smile makeover he wanted. An old injury and resultant PFM crown on #9 had resulted in extremely recessed gingiva revealing a black marginal line. He had a severe periodontal defect between #7 and 8 that still existed after periodontal surgery. Twenty porcelain restorations created a final dazzling smile, with an all porcelain crown for #9 and porcelain veneers for the remaining teeth (Figs. 15–18). Porcelain successfully created the illusion of filling in the triangular space left by the defect. By doing both upper and lower teeth, cuspal guidance was built in to prevent future wear.

Case #1

Cosmetic imaging can even show young patients how cosmetic dental work can improve their appearance. Our fourth patient, a young attractive female, saw that through cosmetic imaging, she could perfect her look by improving the proportions and shape of her four upper incisors. Final treatment consisted of gingival contouring, bleaching the lowers, and ten upper porcelain veneers. This resulted in yet another smile that shows how rewarding and exciting cosmetic dentistry can be for both you and your patients (Figs. 20–24).

Case #3

This wonderful lady had been in my practice for several years (Figs. 25 & 26). As she looked through the Lorin Library during her consultation, she remembered that her teeth had once looked long, shaped, and attractive. As a result of serial posterior dentistry throughout her life, her bite had changed, reducing her vertical dimension. After an accident fractured a front tooth, the six maxillary anterior teeth had been restored with a crown and five veneers. Combined with a bruxing habit, these factors resulted in a gradual but dramatic shortening of her teeth and facial dimensions.

So through the years she had gone from having long, round-shaped teeth to very short, flat teeth. When rounded teeth are worn, they become flat or square. This can mean an older, aged appearance. A cosmetic image using Smile Design #R6 (round centrals/round laterals/round cuspsids) showed how she could look with longer, rounder teeth (Fig. 27). By doing 28 porcelain restorations on both her upper and lower arches, we increased vertical dimension. We then were able to increase the length of her teeth with the round shape she desired, giving her back the youthful, beautiful smile that nature originally intended for her (Figs. 28 & 29).

Conclusion

The technology, materials, and techniques are available to provide our patients with the highest quality treatment and most esthetic cosmetic makeovers. However, every cosmetic case is a mandate to first involve our patients in the decision making, from number of teeth involved to color, tooth shape, shade, and even length. Smile libraries and cosmetic imaging can help improve communication between the patient, the dentist, and the laboratory. These are essential considerations to any cosmetic makeover.

References


Dr. Lorin F. Berland has built an international reputation for his expertise in cosmetic dentistry. He is one of the most published authorities on cosmetic dentistry and has appeared on the television program “20/20,” Inside Edition, Fox News. In addition, Dr. Berland has been in Time, The Wall Street Journal, Reader's Digest and many more. Dr. Berland is the creator of the Lorin Library Smile Style Guide, www.denturewearers.com, and is the founder of Arts District Dentistry, a multi-doctor district that pioneered the concept of spa dentistry. You may contact Dr. Berland at Dallas Dental Spa 2100 Ross, Suite 960 Dallas, Texas 75201 U.S.A.

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