



***Clinical One picture is worth a thousand words:*** *Photography has always been considered an invaluable adjunct in the dental environment and with the advent of the digital age, imaging has become simpler, cost effective and a must have in every practice wishing to purvey quality and modernity in its work practices.*

- **Record keeping for each patient:** Text alone is often inadequate in describing what procedures were completed in many treatments. Patients are often intrigued when they see high quality intra-oral images as well: an image is worth a thousand words and sparks more interest and discussion than bullet points. Garnish your patient notes with imagery and store adequately and safely at all times.
- **Diagnosis and treatment planning:** Intra-oral photographs are an important addition to patient records (charting, radiographs, study models). They provide a static, in-depth look at the patient's dentition that is easily reviewed and compared with the patient's other records.
- **Communication with dental technicians:** In order to provide optimal esthetics in the fabrication of a prosthesis, ceramists and technicians may require patients to attend. Whilst a stone model may accurately provide information on tooth position and shape, they provide no information on tooth or gingival character, shade, or color. A shade guide is often used to convey information on color, but falls short in describing the complexity of depth and shadowing a tooth exhibits. Color-corrected imagery provides much needed information to create a final restoration with more accurate hue, value, and chroma.
- **Enhanced patient education and communication:** Different modalities for patient education - videos, models, brochures are invaluable, especially when coupled with tailored photographic presentations on procedures of your own cases. These cases are especially relevant in all realms of aesthetic dentistry, particularly orthodontics, implantology and crown and bridgework. High definition images help educate patients to imagine the final outcome, comprehend diagnoses and proposed treatment plans and optimising their understanding and case acceptance.
- **Legal documentation:** Every dentist's nightmare is a malpractice lawsuit and sometimes, we may also find ourselves as the treating doctor defending a claim. Relevant and accurate depictions in imaging may help a mistreated patient or perhaps defend a colleague who has provided appropriate treatment. This can be the difference between success and failure in the lawsuit.

- **Insurance verification:** Periodontal charting, radiographs or a narrative may be required by insurance companies before disbursement of benefits. For example, treatment submission of mucogingival defects where there is inadequate attached tissue and or frenum pull is often disputed because radiographs and charting do not show tissue: an high resolution image will help significantly
  
- **Specialist consultation/referral:** Charting, radiographs and written reports were the traditional means by which we referred patients to other health care professionals. High quality imagery adds an entirely new dimension to our referrals and communicates a plethora of valuable information, often hard to verbalise in text. In the field of orthodontics, a complete history accompanied by a high-resolution image may be sufficient enough for an over-the-phone consultation with a specialist.
  
- **Professional advertising/marketing:** Before and after photos are powerful motivators that encourage patients to pursue a treatment plan, whilst showcasing your particular skill set. Many practice websites are plagued with stock images of before and after shots. To the discerning eye, it is obvious these are not original and impinges on the credibility of the practice. Producing your own high-quality images better enhances marketing and makes it easier for you to discuss with your patients, particularly when you have actually completed each procedure.