Proper occlusion is universally mandatory and timeless. Trends come and go in life and in dentistry. It appears we have achieved (once again) the white tooth. The pendulum is swinging back to understanding how teeth need to function.

In the '60s and '70s, we were exposed to many different ideologies of occlusion, which created confusion among the dental community. As a laboratory owner, I took courses from diverse groups of gnathologists including Drs. C. Stuart, G. Douglass, B. Braly and Peter K. Thomas. I was taught the drop-wax technique from its originator, Dr. Everett Payne. I had clients involved with Dr. Jenkelson and his myo-ronics and joined their study groups. Later, I joined the S.O.S. (Society of Occlusal Studies) formed by Dr. Niles Guichet. Dr. Bob Lee entered the arena with his own theory on occlusion.

I worked endlessly to accommodate each individual philosophy. Even with particular attention, my work had to be adjusted in the mouth or be remounted to fine-tune the occlusion, resulting in ongoing frustration.

When teaching an esthetic continuum in Germany, I noticed a very natural occlusal morphology on some of their posterior restorations. Upon further questioning, I learned that these were the result of studying under M. Heinz Polz. I met with Michael Polz and explored his biomechanical waxing technique using the occlusal compass. This, I found, was the missing piece of the puzzle regarding occlusion as I practiced it. The morphology mimicked nature. It was not mechanical looking as was being taught in many schools and found in most textbooks. I found a way to incorporate my extensive gnathological training with the compass technique and developed my own system of applying and teaching the Polz theory. Its significance is that it fits into all current and diverse occlusal concepts.

If we take the time to study and outline individual wear facets on posterior teeth, they act as roadmaps of the patient's parafunctional and chewing directions. We can design the morphology of our restoration to avoid incline contacts along these wear areas in an anterior guided occlusion.

Tips for Success
1. Study all philosophies on occlusion.
2. Examine individual wear areas and their direction on tooth surfaces from mastication and parafunction to avoid incline interferences.
3. Create a differentiation and value added service by applying proper occlusal morphology to your restorations.

In order to remain successful, today's dental laboratory must again focus on occlusion and tooth morphology. With the ever-increasing demand for implants and all-porcelain restorations, it is imperative not to cause failure due to incorrect occlusal morphology.

Esthetics won't disappear but the tide is turning back toward occlusion. Study occlusion and wear areas on tooth surfaces. Learn the parameters of each articulator. One way to insure success of your business today and into the future is to help your clients reduce chairtime and add to the quality of life for the patient. This will differentiate your business from your competition.

About the Author:
DeVreugd is an author, lecturer and owns DeVreugd Dental Laboratory and DeVreugd Signature Seminars at www.idseminars.com in Grand Rapids, Mich. Hands-on courses in posterior and anterior tooth morphology are presented.