Enhanced efficiencies, happier patients

How Planmeca’s PlanScan, a new CAD/CAM solution driven by E4D Technologies, has made one practice more efficient.  [by Renee Knight]

DR. MICHELLE VANDEYKE-TOPP

When Dr. Michelle Vandyke-Topp tells her patients she can complete their crown in one day using Planmeca’s PlanScan CAD/CAM solution, most of them are dumbfounded—especially if they’ve been through the traditional process before.

They find it difficult to believe that, in just a matter of hours, they’ll walk out of the Muskegon, Mich., dental practice sporting their permanent crown, with no need to worry about their temporary failing them or finding the time to come back for another appointment three weeks down the road. “They’re amazed by the technology,” Dr. VanDyke-Topp said, “and ecstatic with the results.”

“When patients come in for the procedure they have nothing but positive things to say,” Dr. VanDyke-Topp said. “They’re aware there will be a 45 minute to an hour wait after I take the scan, so they can go get a coffee or read a book and relax in the waiting room. When they come back their real crown is ready. They often want to see the machine so we bring them into the lab and show them the PlanScan. They’re usually pretty impressed with the technology.”

Dr. VanDyke-Topp began using PlanScan in June, and couldn’t be happier with the efficiencies it’s brought to her practice. She thought about investing in CAD/CAM technology for years, but the up-front costs and concerns with the final results kept her from moving forward. As she learned more about the PlanScan system, she knew the system would be a good fit for her practice, making her more efficient while providing her patients with beautiful crowns in just one day.

Why CAD/CAM
Most of Dr. VanDyke-Topp’s patients lead busy lives. They juggle work obligations with family responsibilities, while finding the time for not just one, but two dental appointments can be a bit of a challenge. And if something goes wrong with the temporary while they’re waiting for their permanent crown, they’re looking at three appointments.

Now, they only need to come in once. They spend a few hours at the practice, and they go home with their permanent crown. Not only is that more convenient for the patient, it also opens up Dr. VanDyke-Topp’s schedule, she said. She can use all those second and third appointment slots to accommodate more patients and increase practice production.

Dr. VanDyke-Topp also loves the fact that she’s able to mill crowns in-house. Even though she had a good relationship with her lab, she’s happy to give up those costly lab bills and to take control of the design process.

“I scan the prep and I design the crown. I know exactly where the margin is and I know how I want the crown to be,” she said. “I had a great lab before I used PlanScan, but I would say one out of every five crowns would have open contacts and would have to be sent back to the lab.”

PlanScan
The PlanScan CAD/CAM Restoration System can produce lab-quality restorations in hours instead of days — with remarkable speed and accuracy, intuitive design software, on-site milling and no impressions or powder. The results of this system’s design is a vastly improved restorative process.

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lab, and that means a third appointment for the patient.”

**Easy integration**
While Dr. VanDyke-Topp was excited to integrate the PlanScan into her practice, she was also a little nervous. She runs a very busy practice, and was worried what introducing a completely new way of treating crowns would do to the schedule. She also feared the learning curve would slow everyone down and throw the schedule completely out of whack.

She was anxious, but the Planmeca team provided everything she needed for success. They offered training that enabled everyone to dive right in from day one, and it didn’t take long for the team to build their skills and speed up the scanning process. While they were told to expect each case to take about three hours, there’s no need for patients to be in the chair that entire time. So while patients wait for their crowns to mill, Dr. VanDyke-Topp can see other patients and keep the schedule moving along.

**Give it a try**
If you’re not sure CAD/CAM is right for your practice, Dr. VanDyke-Topp recommends taking a trip to Dallas and visiting the facility where PlanScan is made. You’ll have the chance to become familiar with the technology and ask any questions you might have. “It’s a great experience,” she said, “and a great way to see just how CAD/CAM technology can benefit your practice.”

“Once you decide you’re ready to make the investment, prepare for change,” Dr. VanDyke-Topp said. “The PlanScan will completely change the way you think about crowns, which might be challenging at first. But just know the benefits far outweigh any growing pains you might experience while you’re learning to use the technology. And if you need any help along the way, Planmeca offers a wonderful support system.”

You also can’t be afraid to make mistakes. They’re going to happen, she said, but you’ll learn from them and move on.

Before Dr. VanDyke-Topp brought
PlanScan into her practice, she offered some of her senior citizen patients free crowns. She told them up front she was learning to use the technology and that while they’d still receive a high-quality crown, it might take longer for her to finish it. Most of the patients she approached didn’t have dental insurance and couldn’t afford a crown otherwise, and were grateful for the opportunity. These patients are now her biggest supporters, and are happy to tell family and friends about this amazing new technology and the wonderful experience they had during their visit to Dental Impressions (dentalimpressions.org).

**Enjoying the benefits**

In the few months Dr. VanDyke-Topp has used PlanScan, she’s improved efficiencies and increased production at her practice. Team members love the hands-on aspect of the technology and the many benefits it brings to the practice, and patients can’t say enough about the beautiful results—results that come in just one day.

PlanScan also has brought a new level of energy and excitement to Dr. VanDyke-Topp’s practice, and she can’t wait to get her hands on the system when she comes in each day.

“I love it,” she said. “I feel bad sometimes because I steal it away from the assistants. I just want to do it all. I’m almost obsessed with it. It’s so much fun.”

[ Figs. 01-04 ] Using Planmeca’s PlanScan CAD/CAM Restoration System can help you deliver fast, esthetic results. In these cases delivered by Dr. Bryan Couch, the technology was used for great results for a crown (Figs. 1-2) and with a veneer case (Figs. 3-4).