Standardizing Data to Streamline the Digital Workflow

Digital dentistry is streamlining virtually every aspect of the restorative workflow. Traditionally, doctors have submitted a physical impression to the lab with the prescription and instructions written out on paper.

This is gradually ceding ground to an entirely digital process where the patient’s information and doctor’s instructions are sent to the lab electronically via a digital impression system. Planmeca PlanScan restorations can be delivered mere days after the patient’s intraoral scans are received by the laboratory. The capabilities of in-office milling, such as the Planmeca PlanMill 40, are even making same-day dentistry a reality. The restorations produced by the PlanScan restorative system reduce the costs and treatment time associated with replacing a tooth, increasing the demand for digital dentistry exponentially.

For those who want to continue to work with their labs, all of the patient information needed to produce a model-less restoration can be submitted digitally to a dental laboratory. Clinicians enter the patient’s information and prescription data into their digital impression system’s software prior to submitting each case. Because the PlanScan is an open system, the dental team can send the file in a standard DIACOM format. Exchanging patient data between almost any system is easy through Planmeca’s Romexis system.

Data standardization is essential to driving down costs for patients, doctors, and laboratories alike by establishing interoperability between intraoral scanners, CAD/CAM software, and other dental systems.

**Bringing Today’s Dental Practice up to Speed**

While digital impression systems are moving toward data standardization, the digital X-ray, practice management, cone-beam computed tomography (CBCT), and digital treatment planning systems found in today’s dental practice require the same sort of attention. Because these systems lack interoperability, they cannot efficiently communicate patient data back and forth and reach their true potential.

To truly maximize the efficiencies and cost savings offered by these technologies, it is imperative that doctors request interoperability among the dental systems that are becoming common in today’s dental practice. As clinicians demand data standardization, the day when the patient’s information, X-rays, CBCT scans, digital impressions, and prescription data can be transferred between the dental office and the dental lab with the simple push of a button draws closer.

Ultimately, having a common standard that allows the disparate systems used in dental care to interoperate will reduce the costs of integrating new technologies into dental practices. This is because the open system allows these technologies to function as plug-and-play devices rather than requiring pricey IT solutions to achieve proper integration. This should make doctors more willing to invest, not only in intraoral scanners, but also in CBCT scanning, digital treatment planning software, and other emerging technologies that are improving the efficiency, predictability and cost-effectiveness of dental restorations.