

AN INTERVIEW WITH

Tuomas Lokki

Inside Dental Technology (IDT): Do you believe that CAD/CAM technology is here to stay in the dental profession?

Tuomas Lokki (TL): Absolutely. However, we are at the very beginning of this transformation. There are many new applications on the horizon. CAD/CAM technology is the entry point for many dental offices converting to digital processes and will be one of the primary technologies in the dental arena in the future. Dental laboratories are, in many cases, leaps ahead of the dental office. I see huge growth opportunities for laboratories in terms of complex and specialty cases because they are perfectly poised to offer dentists expert guidance.

IDT: How do you see the relationship between the dentist and laboratory evolving?

TL: New digital impression technologies will improve the relationship between the laboratory and the dentist. The proliferation of this technology, as well as advancements in dental materials and equipment, will continue to make open and consistent communication between the dentist and dental technician absolutely crucial. New software, such as Planmeca's Romexis, will facilitate this communication through better data management and open architecture, allowing for the easy import and export of digital files to and from any system, and acting as the conduit that brings all the case data together. Additionally, digital impressioning will open new avenues for laboratories to perform more complicated and demanding restorations in less time.

IDT: What are some of the critical factors that laboratories need to consider when working with their dentist partners?

TL: Communication is critical to achieving the best results. Today's technology opens the door to online communication and I would encourage laboratories to use those tools to design restorative solutions in cooperation with their dentists. As these technologies continue to evolve and become

more commonplace, the working relationship between dentists and dental technicians will allow for increased production capacity for both sides.

IDT: Are there scanning systems on the market today that smaller laboratories can afford?

TL: Yes. Scanning systems continue to become more affordable. This allows everyone equal access to digital technologies and will help laboratories develop new product lines and services for their dentist partners. Modular systems, such as the Planmeca Planscan digital restorative system, allow that flexibility for growth. You can start with the scan-only module and then move into the scan and design system, or go all in to full production milling.

IDT: There has been much debate on open versus closed CAD/CAM systems and whether conversion to a digital workflow requires multiple systems. What are your thoughts on this and how can Planmeca address these concerns?

TL: Planmeca has always been a great believer in open platforms. Our imaging software operates on any operating system platform that imports and exports DICOM and Twain images and data. We will continue this same philosophy within our CAD/CAM strategy. We encourage the market to have open solutions and develop technologies that communicate with each other.

IDT: What is your position on the expanding role of the laboratory as it relates to partnering with dental practices in the implant planning process?

TL: Digital impressions as they relate to dental implants, although a small piece of the restorative market, are growing 15% to 17% annually. We expect this trend to increase even more as the population base continues to age. The complexity of implants and the communication bridge that digital impressions provide requires an enhanced service level interface



between dentists and dental technicians. Our Planmeca Romexis software platform provides tools that enable the dental team to visualize and share three-dimensional files, such as CBCT scan data and implant treatment plans, on one platform. This technology helps laboratories create implant-based restorations faster and better with guidance from oral surgeons. Also, due to increasing regulatory controls, dental laboratories that offer implants and implant abutments are likely to face increased regulatory review. This new level of compliance will require dentists do their due diligence in ensuring that they work with dental laboratories that can attest to having quality systems and good manufacturing practices in place to produce such restorations.

IDT: What is your vision on how the dental industry will look in 5 years?

TL: CAD/CAM will play an increasingly important role in the dental industry. Digital impressions in combination with 3D imaging will become the standard of care in most practices. The use of combined datasets has opened new avenues that paved the way to new applications and has created new opportunities for dental laboratories. We have only begun to experience the impact of the digital impression and CAD/CAM revolution. I would like to invite you all to challenge the manufacturing community with your future needs to make the dental profession even more exciting.

Tuomas Lokki is the President of E4D Technologies in Richardson, TX., and Vice President Marketing and Sales Planmeca Oy, Finland.