

Using Opalescent Light Filters in Restoring Teeth

By Lorin Bertand, DDS

The addition of opalescent light filters to porcelain fillers has added a new dimension to cosmetic dentistry. It is now easier than ever to match porcelain veneers with crowns, mask several different colors, and conservatively restore traumatically induced endodontically treated teeth.

It is not uncommon to see patients for whom you are obvious to their obvious need for cosmetic dentistry. Something suddenly happens, and they want immediate treatment. We never sell dentistry. We merely offer the finest service we can. Besides, why rush? As dentistry constantly improves, our service always gets better.

This person in his late 30s had been my patient for more than five years. Although his smile was far from perfect, he was content, and did not desire any change. All efforts by his wife failed to convince him that he needed any smile enhancement. It was only when his daughter had her braces removed that he began to see room for improvement. When she mentioned that he should do something about his front teeth, that clinched it.

He had suffered a common basketball injury 20 years ago—an elbow to the face. As a result, tooth No. 9 required endodontic therapy, was restored with a one-piece cast post and crown. The patient recalls it as a "horrible experience." He remembers vividly the dentist "drilling the tooth down a stub, and then driving a spike through it."

This was the real reason he was always reluctant to

consider any cosmetic treatment. He assumed it required more crowns. Root canal treatment was fine as long as he did not need any more posts and crowns. Fifteen years ago, tooth No. 10 flared up while he was in the service, and a root canal was performed. Although the gutta percha fill appears short, it was asymptomatic. Tooth No. 7 is incisally fractured. A swelling appeared last year apical to tooth No. 8, and endo was done.

The teeth have looked this way for 20 years (Fig. 1). What we have is four teeth and four different colors.

Three have had endo, and one was crowned. New crowns, and post and cores on teeth Nos. 8, 9 and 10, and a porcelain veneer on tooth No. 7 was a viable option. The patient, however, definitely did not want to repeat his experience of 20 years ago times four. Also, I have always had reservations about crowning perfectly sound, yet endodontically treated, anterior teeth (Fig. 2). Probably anyone in practice for more than 10

years has seen that crown on an endodontically treated incisor break off at the gumline at the worst time.

This fracture is at least partly due to the circumferential reduction necessary for a crown on an already weakened tooth. A post and core must be used to prevent this. This also increases the probability of tooth loss due to vertical or horizontal fractures. Porcelain veneers are the more conservative solution. Because the aim is to mask the three different colors on teeth



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Fig. 6