Tug of Thought

DUELING IDEAS IN CONTEMPORARY PROSTHODONTICS

Digital First or Fundamentals First? A Prosthodontic Perspective in Transition

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"We are not just changing how we work—we are redefining what it means to be a prosthodontist."

The evolution of prosthodontics has been disrupted by the relentless adoption of the scanners, CAD/CAM systems, Virtual articulators, and AI-assisted planning. For recent graduates, there is a clear "Digital First" approach, intent on maximizing efficiency, accuracy, and overall patient experience. Such changes are certainly advantageous. Routine digital processes enhance treatment delivery, facilitate better interactions, and improve overall productivity. But as we embrace this transformation, we must pause and ask:

Are we risking the loss of the core principles that once defined our specialty?

What Are We Gaining?

Digital dentistry has reimagined prosthodontics. It offers:

- Enhanced workflow control
- Predictable outcomes
- Higher patient satisfaction
- Seamless collaboration with laboratories

New graduates are often more comfortable with software than with articulators or wax. Digital literacy is no longer optional—it's essential.

What Might We Be Losing?

Yet digital proficiency is not a substitute for clinical wisdom. The older strategies of facebows, wax-ups, and physical articulators provided more than just skills—they offered an insightful understanding of biology along with the function and form. These skills revolve around crafting decisions that no scanner will ever match. When relying completely on digital outputs, clinicians run the risk of detaching critical thinking skills from their work. Technology might provide suggestions, but can the clinician ensure that it's biologically plausible, functionally rational, and esthetically appealing? *Without grounding in fundamentals, digital dentistry risks becoming digital dependency.*

It's Not Either/Or

This is not a debate between digital and analog—it is a call for integration. In today's world, prosthodontists might be forced to become a jack of all trade:

- Biologically grounded yet fluent with technology
- Guided by clinical judgement but comfortable with automation
- Quick to adopt new ideas, slow to lower their guard on standards

Both teaching and academic practices face the challenge of keeping up with such changes. Instead of replacing core competencies, innovations should enhance them.

What Defines the Modern Prosthodontist?

We need to inquire not only how we practice but rather who we are as a profession. Is a prosthodontist defined by their tool, or is he defined by a way of thinking? Change in technology will remain constant. What must remain is our pledge to compassionate, ethical, and patient-centered care. Sound judgment alongside profound comprehension of oral biology renders a scanner, printer, and AI incapable of replacing our care.

A Call to Our Community

The Journal of Prosthetic and Implant Dentistry invites prosthodontists, educators, researchers, and students to join this timely conversation.

Call for Contributions

Theme: Digital First or Fundamentals First?

Submission Type: Viewpoints, Essays, Letters to the Editor, or Short Commentaries

Deadline: 31/07/2025

Word Limit: 500–1500 words

Submit to: ipskeralaeditor@gmail.com

Format: MS Word, Vancouver referencing style, max. 5 references