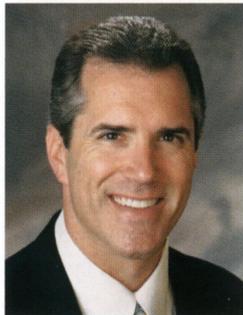


From an Editorial Reviewer



Prior to 1995, I had never heard of “Accreditation” or the American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry. I had been practicing dentistry for nearly 10 years and thought my dentistry was better than average, yet always believed that I could do better, both from a clinical and a diagnostic standpoint. Since graduation, I had attended numerous continuing education courses to improve my dentistry. The results I achieved in cosmetic cases were impressive, considering I never really knew how much better they could be at the time. Then, after attending a continuing education course on cosmetic dentistry by Ross Nash, D.D.S., F.A.A.C.D., my personal and professional life forever changed. I “saw the light” and began to redirect my focus to the type of dentistry I wanted to do each day—I wanted to have a cosmetic-based practice, and believed it was possible.

In 1996, I attended my first AACD Annual Scientific Session in San Diego, California. After listening to many world-renowned clinicians and seeing the type of cosmetic dentistry I never knew existed but hoped was possible, I left the meeting energized and excited by the reality of what was truly possible to achieve, both for myself and for my patients. I was ready to go! While at the meeting, I had registered

for Accreditation, not completely knowing what the overall process would involve, but knowing that I had 2 years to get ready. I thought, “2 years, five cases, no problem; I have plenty of time for this.” Oh, how wrong I was! Little did I know that what was to follow over the next 2 years would open up to me a whole new world of increased professional growth and knowledge, lifelong friendships, and immeasurable personal success. The 2 years went by in the blink of an eye and I finished photographing my last case 1 week before I was to do my Accreditation presentation.

My quest to learn as much as I could as fast as I could led me to join my local chapter of the AACD, the Southwest Affiliate (now the Southwest Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry–AACD). There I met Cary Behle, D.D.S., an Accredited Member and then current Affiliate President. As a result of his educational guidance of and confidence in me, as well as my seeing his incredible dentistry, Cary became the first of my mentors in my path toward Accreditation. Thereafter, I met Joe Carrick, D.D.S., F.A.A.C.D., who became my Accreditation Consultant, and Lawrence Addleson, D.D.S., F.A.A.C.D., who showed me that porcelain can actually look like natural teeth. Through a concerted effort on the part of these three outstanding clinicians, as well as my friendship with Richard Masek, D.D.S. (also an Accredited Member), my dream of Accreditation was successfully realized in May 1999. Had it not been for these four individuals’ belief in me, despite my not being successful after the first examination review, I would not be

where I am today. To these four friends, I owe an eternal debt of gratitude.

The overall process of Accreditation involves many facets. First is the belief that your dentistry can reach new heights seemingly unattainable at the onset. The desired “zone of excellence” to reach Accreditation can represent many different things to each of us. At the forefront is the understanding that your patients are the ones that benefit most from your recognized level of expertise. To present your cases and have your dentistry examined by a group of your peers is an honor and should be viewed as such by all who pursue Accreditation. Regardless of whether you are successful, all who attempt Accreditation demonstrate a desire to be the very best at their chosen profession.

Support from those around you during the Accreditation process is essential. Encouragement from family and friends is crucial to help overcome the stressful times. Your team members become an integral part of your journey toward Accreditation and their response to your efforts and the dentistry you create are vital if you are to reach your ultimate goal. In the 3 years it took for me to reach Accreditation status, I was always surrounded by people who were completely supportive of my efforts and positive that I would reach my goal. It is important that everyone around you during this process offer moral support so that your focus remains fixed upon successfully completing Accreditation.

There is no greater feeling than being recognized by your peers as one

continued on page 14

continued from page 12

of the best. Standing in front of the audience during the Accreditation Awards Ceremony was a moment I'll never forget. What made it even more special was to have my team members there to share it with me. Receiving the award made all the difficult and stressful times worth the effort and reinforced the commitment I made to provide all my patients with the highest level of care. I strongly encourage everyone to participate in the Accreditation process and experience the rewards of your accomplishment.

As an Accredited member of the world's most prestigious dental organization, I found my clinical and diagnostic skills elevated to a new dimension and my confidence level at an all-time high. The so-called "standard of care," as it previously existed, no longer was either "standard" or "average" in my eyes. From this point on, everything I did in dentistry now had to meet the "new" standard of care, the "Accreditation" standard of care. This

was an unexpected change in my thinking from 3 years earlier; a change I welcomed completely and a challenge I will live up to for the rest of my dental career. My dental team would also benefit as a result of my Accreditation. No longer would they consider dentistry as just dentistry. Because they were such an important component in my evolution toward Accreditation, they would share in the accolades of the award, as do others—especially our patients, past, present, and future. They would become promoters of our profession and messengers of our mission and vision.

Since May 1999, the growth and success of my office has been phenomenal. This I directly attribute to the "aftershocks" of the Accreditation award, process, and experience. As a practicing dentist for close to 16 years, I truly look forward to each day I have the privilege of caring for my patients. I can't think of any other profession more personally gratifying and motiva-

tionally rewarding. The ability to create a smile in others is powerful. The power of being able to bring a smile to those who have never smiled is priceless.

My path toward Accreditation was inspired by numerous individuals. My story is not an uncommon one. Accreditation has renewed my passion for dentistry and has given me the opportunity to be more involved in the promotion of dentistry. I hope you are inspired to achieve this goal and to pursue higher learning. I am honored to be an Editorial Review Board member and to give my creative input in the growth and development of this fine journal. See you in Hawaii! *AJD*

Nelson Y. Howard, D.D.S.

Accredited Member
Past-President, SACD-AACD

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