



Do Pragmatic Esthetics Make Sense?



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Recently I read an article with the title “Introducing the Concept of Pragmatic Esthetics, with Special Reference to the Treatment of Tooth Wear,” published in the *Journal of Esthetic and Restorative Dentistry*. The introduction highlights today’s problems and concerns of “cosmetic” dentistry with so-called “dental makeovers” where the immediate result is what counts, no matter if the procedure is more or less invasive. Preservation of the existing tooth structure is not the focus of these treatments, and there’s no real concept behind them.

The problem of excessive tooth wear (erosion), caused more and more by acids from different sources, results in new challenges for dental professionals. We have more and more younger patients with a substantial loss of natural tooth structure with no or only little caries involved. These cases can be considered complex with their substantial loss of vertical dimension, resulting in functional and esthetic challenges. How to treat them? At this point, I would like to remind you of the three articles

on the “three step technique” published back in 2008 by Dr Vailati and Prof Urs Belser. I encourage you to read them if you have not already done so.

Later in the above mentioned article, the following definition can be found: “pragmatic” is defined, in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, as (adjective): “dealing with things sensibly and realistically in a way that is based on practical rather than theoretical considerations.” Its origin is via Latin from the Greek *pragmatikos*, meaning “relating to fact,” but it may be considered that the synonyms presented in a thesaurus also appropriately represent the meaning of the adjective as used in this paper, namely sensible, efficient, down to earth, commonsensical, and realistic.

I agree that in everyday dental practice we can’t always restore our patients the way we could or would like to, because of limitations mainly based on financial reasons. Our patients would like to get a new smile but can’t afford it. Does this automatically lead to a pragmatic approach where we have to start



making compromises? Yes and no. Everyday dentistry is full of compromises we have to face. The important thing in all these situations is to have a wider viewpoint and consider the future of our patients before we start any treatment. The so-called compromise should always keep the ideal goal in mind and lead to patient-orientated

treatment planning. So even a compromise or a pragmatic approach can be the starting point of a great result. Do you know of any dentist who wants on purpose to be a specialist for unesthetic dentistry?

Sincerely,
Alessandro Devigus