

Terminology... Time to change!

Dear Readers,

As a member of the editorial board of this Journal I would like to raise a question regarding using correct terms in publications.

One of the most commonly used terms in adhesive dentistry is "total etching". It originated at a time when we were just starting to extend acid etching with phosphoric acid from enamel to dentin. This, of course, created a lot of psychological problems because it was already a challenge to deliberately apply acid only to enamel, and we avoided any contact of acids with dentin. Only after showing that it is not the acid application per se which poses a major problem for the pulp – as long as we can effectively seal the opened dentin tubules – were we "allowed" to apply phosphoric acid to the entire cavity. This acid etching of the total prepared surface was termed the "total-etch technique".

With further development, the self-etching or self-conditioning primers became available, in which acid monomers were applied onto enamel and dentin. Obviously, this means that we were also acid etching enamel and dentin simultaneously, which by definition is a total-etch technique. The only difference is that with self-etching adhesives, the acid is not removed by water spray and rinsing; in contrast, the phosphoric acid must be washed off from the surface after an effective time, usually ca 30 s on enamel and ca 15 s to 20 s on dentin. Therefore, a new term was used to better distinguish between the two techniques: etch and rinse. This clearly shows that whatever is used for etching the cavity is rinsed off after a certain time of application, while with the self-etching systems, there is no rinsing. We could also call the systems using phosphoric acid the water-rinsing sys-

tems, while the self-etching systems can be called the non-rinsing systems. However, the term "total-etch technique" includes all adhesive systems from the 5th up to the 7th generation or from Type 1 to 4 adhesives, depending on the classification used.

Using the correct term should be one of the aims of a scientific journal. It even helps to teach students and also practitioners to better differentiate between the two approaches. Naturally, most of us do know the meaning of "total etching", even if it is not absolutely correct in its usage. However, more precision in using these terms should be something we all strive for.

There are other terms as well which are not used in an absolutely correct way. Don't all composite resins cure chemically in the sense that chemical reactions take place to turn the monomers into polymers? However, there are different approaches to initiate this reaction. This means it would be much more precise to use the terms "light-initiated-" and "chemically-initiated-curing composite resins". Of course, these terms are more awkward and much longer, and it is much easier to use the conventional term. Nonetheless, shouldn't we at least try to be as precise as possible in a scientific journal?

Sincerely yours,



Dr. med dent. Uwe Blunck