

Understanding the Cost of Denture Repair Service

Many DPs are regularly confronted by a curious, disadvantaged or elderly patient who, because it has been so long since their denture was made, simply does not understand how dental fees are structured. The patient's difficulty sometimes transfers to the DP who may not be skilled at dealing with such situations and a feeling of "guilt" causes the dental prosthetist to undervalue their skills and the service they provide thereby resulting in misunderstandings.

A typical example is the patient who says that they can't understand how it can cost \$140.00 (or whatever!) to "stick" the same tooth back on a denture?

Let us take a moment to analyse the major steps involved in the procedure of "sticking" the same tooth back on a denture". The same steps can be adapted for many other procedures that a dental prosthetist performs! This list will definitely not be complete for every dental prosthetist because levels and quality of service do vary and that is often the reason for a difference in fees.

IMPORTANT NOTE –

Time taken to perform the procedure will vary depending upon the level of service you are being offered and is therefore not detailed in this explanation, but time is also required to do many intangible things such as sterilising, cleaning the office, and purchasing of equipment and materials required to be able to do the repair. The fee you pay will be inclusive of all the points below, regardless of the time taken to complete the service.

1. We will look at the **Materials** involved to enable the procedure.
2. We will look at the **Equipment** necessary to be able to do the procedure.
3. We will attempt to determine the necessary **Overheads** required permitting the professional provision of that service at a level of safety expected by the community, government and our peers.

Some of the materials and equipment may not be obvious to patients, but all DP's would understand that a repair is not possible without them.

MATERIALS;

- **Latex Gloves** for collecting and refitting denture
- **Disinfectant** to cleanse the denture,
- **Sticky Wax** to hold tooth in place
- **Plaster or Silicone** to make a registration key
- **Separating Medium** to prevent adhesion of acrylic to the plaster
- **Self Curing Acrylic Monomer and Polymer** to permit the repair
- **Hot Water** to permit the curing of the acrylic
- **Cold Water** for washing at various stages
- **Pumice** to polish the ground acrylic
- **Whiting or High Shine** to finish the polish
- **Articulating Paper** to check the occlusion upon completion
- **Plastic Bag** to return denture to patient
- **Patient Record or Computer** to record patient details
- **Receipt Book or Computer** (and paper) to record payment

EQUIPMENT;

- **Container** to receive and disinfect denture
- **Bench Space** to enable work required for the repair
- **Bunsen Burner** to melt sticky wax
- **Steriliser** to sterilise drills or mirrors and other equipment used in adjusting repair
- **Plaster Bowl and Spatula** to mix plaster required for repair model
- **Paint Brush** for applying separating medium to plaster model
- **Wax Knife or Le Cron carver** to apply sticky wax for holding sections
- **Mixing Bowl and Spatula** for mixing the acrylic
- **High Speed Drill** for preparing the denture and tooth for repair
- **Pressure Flask** for processing the acrylic resin
- **Clamp** to apply pressure to flask holding broken denture
- **Pumice Tray** to hold prepared pumice for polishing
 - **Dental Lathe and Polishing Mops** to apply pumice

OVERHEADS;

- **Electricity** for lighting, motors and water heating
- **Gas** for melting sticky wax
- **Rental of Premises** for duration of time needed
- **Registration Fee** for business name and to be able to operate as a dental prosthetist and dental technician.
- **Insurance** for professional indemnity, premises and other risks
- **Telephone** to be able to make initial contact and order supplies
- **Advertising** such as Yellow Pages or signage, necessary to attract patient to the denture clinic in the first place
- **Taxation** payable on income received for the repair
- **Bank Fees** charged for the eftpos, cheque or credit card payment of your account and income
- **Wages** for receptionist, dental technician and/or dental prosthetist that you deal with to enable the repair
- **Technical Training** The cost and length of training is now quite substantial for dental technicians and dental prosthetists
- **Vehicle** needed to enable attendance of staff at the clinic
- **Furniture and Fittings** of the waiting room and denture clinic

All of the items listed in each of the three categories are ongoing, **direct costs** that each and every dental prosthetist will experience and although quantities used may be small in some cases, it does not change the fact that a simple repair, (***even “sticking the same tooth on”***) is not possible unless all of those expenses have been met. As business people, we must consider return upon our investment not only in outlays for materials, equipment and overheads, **but also in the outlay of the many years of training that it took your DP to be able to legally and safely provide the service.** We should never underestimate the value of the service that we provide just because some patients don't understand the costs of running a service business, because if we do, we will be frustrated by a poor return for a huge effort and set a low standard of expectation from the consuming public.

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