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ACCREDITATION ESSENTIALS

ACCREDITATION EXCITEMENT IN MADISON

By Michael Sesemann, D.D.S.

Three years ago, the AACD Board of Governors put tremendous amounts of time and energy into reforming the Accreditation process. As with all things, the time had come for it to evolve, to become a credentialing process that would be more fair to all in terms of communication, simplicity, and timing. It would be a credentialing process structured to allow the candidates to proceed at their own rates of discovery and learning.

The process would be beyond reproach ethically by providing anonymous examination of the clinical cases and eliminating the pressure of the in-person Accreditation presentation. By virtue of the anonymous Clinical Case Submission, a candidate could now pursue Accreditation without the stigma of having passed or failed. Accreditation could now more closely resemble what those of us who are Accredited know it to be: the pursuit of excellence through education and skill enhancement.

This past January, I asked 26 other Examiners to join me in Madison to participate in the new Clinical Case Examinations process. This was going to be our first full-scale Clinical Case Examination, with a tremendous number of cases (189 to be precise, and 27 Examiners). There is always a feeling of nervousness surrounding any event of great importance, and this was no different. After all, one significant winter storm could strand a number of

our Examiners arriving by air, making the completion of our task impossible. I am happy to report that although the temperature was around 0°, no weather problems hindered our arrival in Madison.

It was paramount for all of us to meet and train for the process. We met at the Executive Offices of the AACD for Examiner Training where, for three hours, we discussed previous cases and critiqued our own examination style until we felt we were all on the same page in terms of judging the examination criteria and assessing the correct value per criterion. Through proper calibration, the Examiners could bring their own individual eye (sight recognition) and experience to their scoring. However, we would be trained to be consistent in our value assessments. Would we be exactly the same? Of course not—we have our own individual perspectives. However, because of this critical exercise I found our scores to be “grouped” throughout the examinations, so there were no statistically suspicious scores that deviated from the others in an examination group. In other words, after the Examiners had individually arrived at their final scores, without discussion, they were consistently within a 2–6 point spread.

We examined 102 cases on the first day. Of those, 49% passed! On the second day, the pass rate fell somewhat, making the two-day combined pass rate 40%. Both of these excellent pass rates are unprecedented! I must accentuate that this high pass rate was not because our Examiners were guilty of “lowering the bar,” but simply because we saw some great dentistry! I believe

it speaks to the fact that our educational materials (*A Guide to Accreditation Photography*, *A Guide to Accreditation Criteria*, Workshops, CE courses, and the Accreditation Essentials section of the *Journal of Cosmetic Dentistry*) are allowing candidates to understand exactly what is expected of them to be successful in their pursuit of Accreditation, and they are submitting it. As for the difference between the first and second day, there simply was a difference in the dentistry. We examined on a “first sent in, first examined basis.” We surmised that the cases sent in early were deemed ready by the candidate and that cases sent in just under the cut-off date were as good as they could be before having to be submitted.

To those who were successful, I extend my congratulations. To those who were not, I urge you to use the process for self-examination and to continue the pursuit of this illustrious goal. It is a rare Accredited member who has not first felt the disappointment of receiving a letter that details their failure in the pursuit of Accreditation. Speaking from my own experience, failure was painful, yet it was the best thing that could have happened to me, although it took a year for me to realize it.

I fully expect the pass percentages to continue to grow as more candidates are better prepared than ever before. I hope that you'll be part of that group. *MS*

