



Embracing the Benefits of Digital Dentures

WITH MICHAEL DAVID SCHERER, DMD, MS, FACP

An industry expert in the field of dental implants, dentures, and digital technology, Dr. Michael David Scherer has lectured, published articles, and conducted online courses related to implant dentistry, clinical prosthodontics, and digital technology with a special emphasis on implant overdentures. He maintains YouTube channels dedicated to education on the use of LOCATOR F-Tx, LODI, and related products. Dr. Scherer, who maintains a prosthodontics and implant dentistry practice in Sonora, CA, recently spoke with us about the changing digital tide of dentures.



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Q: What are the benefits of using a digital workflow for an implant-retained overdenture?

A: The benefits with digital implant overdentures are many, but likely the greatest benefit is the time savings. Traditional implant overdenture treatment requires 4 to 10 clinical steps to complete, but when you approach it digitally using scanning, you can complete them in as few as 2 clinical visits. The patient response for the expedited treatment is tremendous, because we are living in a world where our patients are asking us for their teeth "yesterday," and digital methods of denture construction are truly expedited at a reasonable cost. For example, if a patient drops their existing denture and causes it to break, I can have a replacement 3D-printed or milled to be ready for their next appointment in as little as a few hours. It's tremendous.

Q: How is new technology impacting this denture workflow and the end product?

A: Without a doubt, the biggest advancement has been the advent of 3D printing, combined with contemporary attachment systems that make overdentures simple, such as the LOCATOR Attachment Systems from Zest Dental Solutions.

We are just at the beginning of the development of printing digital dentures, and the materials and methods are evolving to truly make a printed overdenture amazing. While many companies are working on new systems, resins, and workflows, this is an ideal time to jump into digital dentures with 3D-printing. The material and manufacturing costs are lower and printer prices have come down. It's a win-win!

Q: Are there misconceptions about taking on digital overdentures?

A: Absolutely. Many dentists and technicians worry about how digital workflows will fit into their everyday practice. I get it—there is a bit of disruption at first, but I have personally coached many dentists, denturists, and lab technicians on how to implement digital denture methods, and it doesn't need to be confusing or excessively complex. The key is to keep it simple. You can integrate digital denture methods at any of the analog steps that are part of the traditional workflow. It is amazing to be able to have complete flexibility of the workflow, including the evaluation of prosthetic space, virtual tooth positioning prior to cutting teeth, and placing a virtual block-out over LOCATOR denture housings for passive fit of the prosthesis.