

38/10
Nov. 16 2007
51(z) No 5/6 2007

Overseas Made Dental Prosthetic Items

Members may have inquiries from patients about the location of the manufacture of dental prostheses. Despite comments otherwise, this is not directly regulated by the TGA. If dentists wish to use overseas laboratories, the issue of quality and responsibility resides with the dentist who orders the crown and inserts it.

Media suggestions of laboratory work containing lead or other unsafe metals in Australia have no basis. Many dentists use overseas laboratories because they believe the service is more reliable, of more consistent quality and less expensive.

It is suggested that if you are asked by your patients where the crown is made, that you should ask your provider of technician services to advise you. You might also ask them for some document stating that the materials used in the crown are the same that are used by local laboratories, if it is the case that manufacture in whole or in part takes place offshore.

There are a number of dental technicians and dentists who would like this practice of the use of overseas laboratories to cease. The reality is that overseas made crowns have been part of dentistry in Australia for decades. The best way to deal with this with your patients is to fully disclose to your patients your understanding of the issues and the manufacture of their crown(s).

ADAQ does not have a policy on overseas made crowns. ADAQ neither condones nor disapproves of the circumstances of overseas manufacture, which are more complicated than has been portrayed in the media. The same issues exist in relation to overseas dental prosthetic manufacture across Europe and the USA.

There will always be a local dental technician industry, and patients have every right to ask where crowns are made if they want to know. If a patient wishes to have a crown that is irrefutably made in Australia, and if that is not your normal arrangement, then you should explain in terms of your clinical beliefs about quality and whether there may be an additional cost. Dental Technicians are not registered in any states apart from Queensland (where it ceases on December 31 2011), and so issues of standards of manufacture are erroneous, as the clear responsibility lies with the dentist.

Dentists ought to be clear on the technician services they receive in a substantially deregulated market. Direct dealing and contracting with technician service suppliers overseas ought to be done only with extreme caution.

Members who speak to the media about this issue do this with some risk and may well cause public misunderstanding. If you do have a request to talk to the media, please contact ADAQ first to ensure that you are informed on the issues. It is ADAQ preference that we speak for our Queensland Dental Profession members as a whole.

Brad Wright

