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Durham Tech Dental Lab Tech program acquires digital dentistry equipment

Durham, NC – Durham Tech recently installed Sirona Connect and CEREC technologies in its Dental Laboratory Technician workshops to train students in digital dentistry techniques. The combined digital scanner, CAD/CAM system, and milling unit eliminates the need for casting impressions and can create aesthetically pleasing, precisely fitting crowns, veneers, bridges, and implants in as little as 90 minutes.

Program Director and Instructor Gregory Walton, Certified Dental Technician, explains the importance of this system. “The dental industry, like many others, is moving toward complete digital dentistry. The products that this equipment creates are a better fit and a better match with the existing enamel. Plus, patient comfort is improved because no more pasty impressions are required, and temporary crowns – which traditionally have required two visits to the dentist – are no longer needed.”

The system works like this. First, the scanner takes a photo of the patient’s teeth, and a translucent zirconia model is formed. The lab tech creates a template for the final product – a crown, for example – using the computer-aided design software. Then the model is heated to 1540 degrees Centigrade, which forms and strengthens it. Finally, the crown is polished, stained, and glazed to match the patient’s adjoining teeth. The patient can be fitted with the permanent crown and on their way in no time.

Walton also addressed the misconception that the increasing reliance on digital dentistry is reducing the need for jobs in the field. “On the contrary,” he says. “In the past, bad teeth were pulled and replaced with dentures. These new types of technology are allowing us to do more restorations than ever before, so job demand is very high.”

Durham Tech’s two-year Dental Laboratory Technology program is the only program of its kind in the Carolinas, Virginia, and Tennessee; it is accredited by the American Dental Association. Graduates of the program receive an Associate in Applied Science, and can either go to work in a dental lab or office, or continue their education at a college or university to become hygienists or dentists.