MEMORANDUM

TO: Third & Fourth Year Dental Students

FROM: Dr. Gary Hildebrandt, Division Director
Dr. Ed Ziegler, Clinic Director

DATE: March 11, 2008

SUBJECT: Polishing Amalgam Restorations

We want to provide the finest restorative services for patients of the School of Dentistry and encourage a culture of excellence among the developing dental profession. Finishing and polishing of dental amalgam restorations, because it must be accomplished at a subsequent appointment, is an indicator of the meticulous health care we provide our patients.

Finishing and polishing is a process of improving the surface contour and quality of a restoration and is part of a continuum of restorative procedures. The finishing and polishing of dental amalgam cannot be accomplished at the time of placement but must be delayed until a subsequent appointment. The reasons for finishing and polishing dental amalgam restorations are (1) to optimize contours and anatomy, (2) to improve marginal precision, (3) to reduce corrosion potential, (4) to decrease the propensity for plaque adherence, (5) to reduce periodontal irritation from nearby restorations, (6) to fine tune occlusal function, and (7) to create a smooth, acceptable surface for contact with the tongue, cheeks, and lips.

For these reasons, amalgam restorations are not considered complete until they have been finished and polished. Dental students should be aware that the number of completed (polished) amalgam restorations is factored into competency exam eligibility decisions.