



In his letter to the editor ("Dental Teachers or Dental Technicians?" (*Pediatr Dent.* 2004;26:390) Dr. Ari Kupietzky eloquently stated the importance of treating a child patient as a person and not just an accumulation of teeth. That worthy goal is both a challenge and a purpose of all caring dentists who treat children.

Dr. Kupietzky's message is diluted, however, when he argued that "Treating the disease is easy. It's technical and boring." Why does Dr. Kupietzky believe that psychological and philosophical issues of treating youngsters must be compared or contrasted to the clinical aspects of treatment? Aiming to master the art and science of clinical pediatric dentistry, and keep that mastery current, are also worthy and important goals for dentists, but those quests are neither more or less important than the humanistic

considerations of patient care. There are many parts to the grand scheme of things in dentistry and each deserves its own concern and respect.

There are too many children who appear to have been treated by a dentist who was "bored" and thought clinical dentistry was "easy." Other dentists are busy retreating those children. Dental Teachers or Dental Technicians? How about Dental Teachers AND Dental Technicians?

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Recently, there has been increased attention given to the use of thermoplastic impression materials to identify children and young adults. It is the position of the American Board of Forensic Odontology (ABFO) that the use of these materials is of limited value. The ABFO applauds the efforts of various organizations to assist in the forensic identification of missing children but we also feel that the limitations of various identification techniques should be discussed. A thermoplastic impression can assist in the identification of unknown remains but it has limits when used as the sole means of identification. The ABFO's position paper on the use of these materials can be found on our website at www.abfo.org.

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