

## Dear Dad,

I know it has been 15 years since you last practiced dentistry. Half of me says it seems like only yesterday. The other half says it seems like a long time ago. So many things have changed since then. If I could bring you back for just 10 minutes, I would tell you how much dentistry has evolved in the 21st century. I know you remember the inception of implants, intraoral cameras, fiberoptics and computers. But have you ever heard of invisible braces?

Yes, they make invisible braces! Invisible braces can give the patient beautiful straight teeth and hardly anyone will ever notice. It works through a series of clear, comfortable, and removable aligners that no one can tell the patient is wearing.

There is a light that whitens teeth up to 9 shades in just 1 hour in the office. In-office teeth whitening methods are performed with bleaching gel and a laser light. This is a good method of teeth whitening for sensitive teeth, as the process can be closely monitored. The teeth are carefully isolated from the lips and gums, and then a bleaching gel is applied to them. A laser is used in conjunction with the gel to accelerate and amplify the tooth whitening process.

A lot of patients are choosing to sleep during their dental treatment. It's very simple, all they have to do is take a little blue pill called Triazolam one hour before their dental visit. The medication lasts up to two to four hours and has almost no side effects. An apprehensive patient can now sleep through their dentistry.

You would flip over this new machine that mills crowns and inlays on the spot. There are no impressions to take and send to the lab. With this machine, an infrared photo is taken of the tooth and brought into the computer. In the computer you now design the crown. Next, a block of porcelain is placed in a milling machine. The dentist then sends the crown design to the milling machine. The milling machine then takes that block of porcelain and mills out a crown. This process takes about 10 to 15 minutes.

There is also a laser that finds cavities. It acts like a Geiger counter. Simply shine and scan the laser over the tops of the teeth. It reacts when a cavity is present and sends an interesting alarm tone as the size of the cavity increases. Now you can detect caries early without poking and prodding with the explorer.

What's more, we have a machine that will allow the dentist to do a restoration with no anesthetic. It can be used for small to medium size cavities on the chewing surfaces. This technology allows you to gently "spray away" the decay on the teeth, using a fine stream of microscopic abrasive particles (similar to those found in toothpaste whiteners).

Nowadays, x-rays are taken with a sensor attached to a computer. We call them digital images. Digital images have come to replace traditional x-rays in dentistry. Digital x-ray images provide more information in a much clearer and accurate format. These new x-rays are quicker and more comfortable! No more processor or developing chemicals.

By the year 2014 all dental offices will have to be paperless. The basic idea is that office automation will make paper redundant for routine tasks such as record-keeping and bookkeeping. We can also send insurance claims, x-rays, and patient statements over cable lines called the internet. Paperless is more economical and efficient. No more trying to read someone else's handwriting or cross-contaminating files. Plus, the expense is minimal.

Dad, I could go on and on about all the advances in the last decade. It is so exciting to be part of a profession that is always evolving and progressing. Dentistry always astonishes me. I want to Thank You from the bottom of my heart for bringing me up in such an amazing profession.

Love Rebecca



Rebecca's father is the late Dr. Louis Gerber, a Pediatric Dentist and member of SDCDS from 1955 to 1994.

Rebecca Gerber has been a Practice Management Coach and owner of Office Management Services since 2000. In 2006 she started teaching Dental Front Office Administration. Earlier this year Rebecca opened her own Front Office training facility located in Pacific Beach called the Academy of Dental Practice Careers. For more information regarding consulting services or front office training, call 858-274-4777 or visit her website at [www.dentalpracticecareers.com](http://www.dentalpracticecareers.com).