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Laser-scanner technology on the horizon for C&B labs

Can a $30,000 machine really put dental technicians out of business? Rumors and whispers of a machine that can make crowns at chairside have been spreading across North America during the past year or two.

The *machine* is a laser scanner combined with a DEC—(Digital Equipment Computer) driven milling machine that can carve crowns, inlays, onlays and up to 3-unit bridges out of Dicor material.

With this $25,000-35,000 machine, scrap and remakes are almost nil. Designed to be used in the operatory, the technology behind the machine stems from micro-milling techniques used to make titanium microchips for computers and missile parts.

Demonstrated in France two years ago at the National Dental Materials show in Paris, the machine is the brainchild for Dr. Francois Duret, and Hennson, a holding company in France. Duret is presently using the scanner in his Lyon, France dental practice.

According to Dr. Omar Reed, president of Napili Limited, a continuing education group for dentists that publishes *Teeth Talk*, the laser scanner is not actually a threat to the independent dental laboratory. "Having owned a lab for 20 years, I know the laboratory's situation. The scanner should eliminate the technician's *routine* work," he says. He does feel the technician's role must change with technology, however, to become part of the dental team in the operatory responsible for taking shades and cosmetic work.

Until now, dental prostheses manufacture has been limited to materials that can be melted and cast. Presently, Dicor is the only material being used with the scanner but the door is open for new materials.

One material presently being researched at the University of Pennsylvania is Silene, a synthetic plastic used in bonding agent. A demonstration is planned to take place this November or December. Arrangements are being made for Dr. Duret to visit the U.S. to demonstrate and lecture on the machine. Watch **LMT** for more details.