



# Did you want fries with that?

## What do Mattel toys, some seafood, tires, pet food, lawn trimmers, remote control airplanes, tower fans, AND TOOTHPASTE HAVE IN COMMON?

Well, first, they are all products imported into the United States from China. Second, they were all mentioned as a “steady stream of dangerous imports” (August 2007, *USA Today*). The article stated: “All fingers of blame for its unsafe goods are pointed at Beijing, but the economic juggernaut for the U.S. is our insatiable appetite for cheap products, labor, and loose regulations. Rather than simply feed the beast, we should help tame it.”

I am the dental representative to the IdentAlloy council ([identalloy.org](http://identalloy.org)). This nonprofit organization (501c-3) provides certificates that manufacturers distribute through dental laboratories to let you know the classification and content of the alloy used in your PFM restorations (high noble, noble, or predominantly base). IdentAlloy recently added a similar program ensuring verifiable content for three classifications of ceramic materials (aluminous oxide, feldspathic porcelain, and zirconium). These same IdentAlloy and IdentCeram stickers are available to manufacturers throughout the world. They do not speak to the quality of the restorations that you are provided, but at least the material content has a verifiable component.

Across this nation, and many others, people are adhering to Six Sigma, lean manufacturing, and ISO competency standards. These standard operating procedures and methods of doing business help ensure the quality of the products and processes that are involved in the manufacture of goods that we use every day. They are international standards that should be adhered to in all countries. Although there are safety and health concerns with Chinese imports, the reality is, we should have those same concerns about materials made domestically. There are more than 12,000 dental laboratories in the United States. Only slightly more than 400 of them are certified, and only three of our states require a laboratory to have a certified dental technician on staff!

Let me put that another way. In 47 of our 50 states, the person who said to you yesterday, “*Did you want fries with that?*” could become your dental technician tomorrow, without any training, verifiable competency, certification, or testing. Do not mishear me — I am not suggesting that we wave a magic wand and try to increase the amount of regulations either abroad or domestically in the manufacture

and certification for verifiable materials and competency. However, I am suggesting that we pull our heads up out of the sand about these issues and begin to recognize that we should put in place methods and materials to ensure that the products we use and place as permanent restorations in our patients’ mouths have verifiable materials included in them and were made by a verifiable, competent dental laboratory. I stand in support of certification or an acceptance of certification standards for dental technicians and laboratories on a state-by-state or national basis. This same threat that makes headlines today from China unfortunately is in our midst domestically as well as in dentistry. Let’s be proactive and do something that is both in our patients’ and our own best interests before we make page one.



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There is currently a National Association of Dental Laboratories ([nadl.org](http://nadl.org)) that provides testing and certification of dental labs and dental technicians through its National Board for Certification ([nbcert.org](http://nbcert.org)). This nonprofit national association has also partnered in the development of ISO standards for dental labs called DAMAS (dental appliance

manufacturers audit scheme). The FDA is now involved heavily with regulating these custom manufactured medical devices because of the offshore aspect and import/export issues. OSHA, IRS, ADA, FTC, and other regulatory bodies have stances and roles in this profession as well. Let us do the right things for the right reasons and with the patient’s best interests always in mind. As a profession, we should not wait until the headlines scream about dentistry instead of lead paint in toys from China to take action. This link to [http://macombdaily.com/stories/082607/loc\\_dental001.shtml](http://macombdaily.com/stories/082607/loc_dental001.shtml) provides an article from August 2007 regarding this discussion in a local paper in Michigan.

Buyer beware indeed, whether it is made in Asia, Europe, South America, or any of the continents ... even right here in the good old USA. Consider supporting certification of dental laboratories and technicians, wherever they are. **DE**

*Mark Murphy is a featured presenter for the National Dental Network and the National Lab Network. He lectures internationally on a variety of dental clinical and behavioral subjects. Dr. Murphy practices part time in Rochester Hills, Mich., and is the director of professional relations at The Pankey Institute. You may contact him by e-mail at [mmurphy@pankey.org](mailto:mmurphy@pankey.org) or visit [mtmurphydds.com](http://mtmurphydds.com).*