



CR is the original and only independent dental product testing organization with funding only from dentists!

## Saving Money with Low-Cost Private-Label Dental Supplies

**Gordon's Clinical Observations:** Most practice management advisors have recommended limiting dental material and supply costs to 5–6% of gross revenue. However, according to CR surveys, rising inflation and supply-chain disruptions in recent years have caused the average cost of supplies for most offices to increase to 8.7% of gross revenue. To save money, many are turning to private-label house brands (Benco, Burkhart, Henry Schein, Patterson, etc.) and other low-cost brands. In CR evaluations, our research team has found that many of these products compete very well with premium products, and some have been included in *Clinicians Reports*. CR discusses the advantages and limitations of low-cost brands and provides helpful clinical tips in this report.



Low-cost impression materials were about 1/5 the price of premium materials.

Today, the average dental office will likely pay an additional \$21,000 for dental supplies compared to 2019 (according to CR survey data). As the supply costs continue to rise, many clinicians are considering lower-cost alternatives and private-label brands as a source of significant savings.

This report discusses potential savings and offers clinical tips when trying to reduce supply costs.

### Performance, Satisfaction, and Savings

- **CR testing** confirms that premium brands generally have the best combination of features and performance and are preferred by many clinicians for complex cases where precision is required. However, for routine cases, low-cost brands and private-label house brand products are a viable alternative.
- **Low-cost alternatives** are considered by many clinicians to be an excellent value because of their affordability and clinically adequate performance. Most clinicians surveyed were satisfied with the performance of private-label brands and other lower-cost brands.
- **Clinicians surveyed strongly recommended** use of low-cost, private-label, disposable infection control and other supplies (see table at right). However, use of low-cost bonding agents, cements, esthetic resins, curing lights, and other dental supplies critical to clinical success was more guarded.

**Satisfaction with low-cost private-label dental products**  
**CR Survey Data (n=271)**

**How did lower-cost products compare to more expensive brands?**

- 1% Better
- 64% Comparable
- 32% Inferior, but acceptable
- 0.4% Unacceptable

**How satisfied were you with the performance of lower-cost products?**

- 12% Highly satisfied
- 54% Moderately satisfied
- 28% Neutral/Mixed
- 6% Dissatisfied

Potential Savings Using Low-Cost Disposables	
Product	Potential Savings*
Mixing pads	55%–90%
Cotton rolls	53%–63%
Tray covers	52%–78%
Plastic cups	42%–73%
Saliva ejectors	39%–70%
Evacuation tips	37%–78%
Cotton-tipped applicators	31%–72%
Chair covers	28%–54%
Nitrile gloves	26%–70%
Patient bibs	10%–42%

\*Based on suggested retail pricing from various vendors

### Example Low-Cost and Private-Label House Brands Highlighting Potential Savings Over Premium Brands

Dual-Arch Bite Trays	Single-Use Diamonds	Disposable Prophylaxis Angles	Implant Systems	Dental Instruments	Temporary Materials
Burkhart Sideless Posterior Disposable Bite Trays	Benco Optimum Disposable Diamond Burs	Darby Disposable Prophylaxis Angles	Implant Direct Legacy Implants	Henry Schein Apical Elevator	Patterson Temporary Crown and Bridge Material
Save up to 83%	Save 89% vs. Multi Use	Save up to 77%	Save about 45%	Save up to 75%	Save up to 53%

### Advantages and Limitations of Low-Cost and Private-Label Brands

#### Advantages

- Lower cost.
- Quality and performance is typically clinically adequate and often comparable to premium brands. Many low-cost brands are reportedly manufactured and private-labeled in the same facilities manufacturing premium brands.

#### Limitations

- May lack desired features, available options, ease of use, and product support of premium brands.
- Despite overall acceptable performance, quality and results may vary among brands depending on sourcing.
  - *Buyer Beware:* Private-label distributors may not have control over sourcing and formulation changes.
- Some have raised concerns regarding quality control, sustainability, and human rights, etc. for certain supplies sourced internationally.



## Saving Money with Low-Cost Private-Label Dental Supplies *(Continued from page 1)*

### Clinical Tips

- **Increasing patient fees.** 67% of clinicians surveyed indicated they have increased fees in order to deal with rising supply costs and economic challenges. Talk with insurance companies to negotiate insurance reimbursement fees and to ensure your fee schedule is adjusted for inflation.
- ▶ **Success with House Brands**
- **Read the directions for use.** Though often overlooked, directions for seemingly identical products can vary significantly. Pay careful attention to recommended working and setting times, curing times, etc. to avoid costly remakes and clinical failures.
- **Try new products/materials.** Ask distributors and manufacturers about free samples you can use to test handling properties, esthetics, and other properties in your office on “easy” cases with little or no risk.
- ▶ **Saving Money**
- **Inquire about discounts.** Ask your sales representative if any discounts are available. Most distributors offer a variety of pricing tiers, quantity price breaks, free shipping discounts, etc. You may be able to find lower prices by joining a GPO (Group Purchasing Organization), or by shopping at smaller online retailers or online marketplaces (Amazon, ebay, Net32, etc.).
  - *Be wary of highly discounted products.* Deeply discounted pricing may be an indication that products may be nearing their expiration date, are of questionable quality, or are gray market (legal, but purchased from foreign markets or unauthorized distribution channels) or black market (illegal, counterfeit products).
- **Local suppliers.** If you live in an area with a dental supply house, consider supporting your local economy. Ask about competitive pricing on supplies, equipment, and service.
- **Manage inventory closely.** Rotate inventory paying close attention to expiration dates. Use products closest to their expiration date *first* to minimize expired and wasted inventory. Resist the temptation to hoard a large surplus of perishable items (which may be tempting given recent supply chain challenges). Inventory tracking and management systems are available and may be helpful for some offices.

**CR CONCLUSIONS:** Clinicians looking to reduce supply costs are generally satisfied when switching to lower-cost or private-label house brands. Clinicians generally find the performance of low-cost brands to be acceptable or even comparable to more expensive brands. Clinicians surveyed strongly recommended use of private-label disposables, infection control, and hygiene supplies. If switching to a new product, clinicians are encouraged to read the directions and get to know the material before attempting difficult cases as working times and instructions can vary significantly even among seemingly similar products. **Many private-label house brand dental supplies are an excellent value considering their low cost and clinically adequate performance.**

## What is CR?

### WHY CR?

CR was founded in 1976 by clinicians who believed practitioners could confirm efficacy and clinical usefulness of new products and avoid both the experimentation on patients and failures in the closet. With this purpose in mind, CR was organized as a unique volunteer purpose of testing all types of dental products and disseminating results to colleagues throughout the world.

### WHO FUNDS CR?

Research funds come from subscriptions to the *Gordon J. Christensen Clinicians Report*®. Revenue from CR’s “Dentistry Update”® courses support payroll for non-clinical staff. All Clinical Evaluators volunteer their time and expertise. CR is a non-profit, educational research institute. It is not owned in whole or in part by any individual, family, or group of investors. This system, free of outside funding, was designed to keep CR’s research objective and candid.

### HOW DOES CR FUNCTION?

Each year, CR tests in excess of 750 different product brands, performing about 20,000 field evaluations. CR tests all types of dental products, including materials, devices, and equipment, plus techniques. Worldwide, products are purchased from distributors, secured from companies, and sent to CR by clinicians, inventors, and patients. There is no charge to companies for product evaluations. Testing combines the efforts of 450 clinicians in 19 countries who volunteer their time and expertise, and 40 on-site scientists, engineers, and support staff. Products are subjected to at least two levels of CR’s unique three-tiered evaluation process that consists of:

1. Clinical field trials where new products are incorporated into routine use in a variety of dental practices and compared by clinicians to products and methods they use routinely.
2. Controlled clinical tests where new products are used and compared under rigorously controlled conditions, and patients are paid for their time as study participants.
3. Laboratory tests where physical and chemical properties of new products are compared to standard products.

Products evaluated by CR Foundation® (CR®) and reported in the *Gordon J. Christensen Clinicians Report*® have been selected on the basis of merit from hundreds of products under evaluation. CR® conducts research at three levels: 1) multiple-user field evaluations, 2) controlled long-term clinical research, and 3) basic science laboratory research. Over 400 clinical field evaluators are located throughout the world and 40 full-time employees work at the institute. A product must meet at least one of the following standards to be reported in this publication: 1) innovative and new on the market, 2) less expensive, but meets the use standards, 3) unrecognized, valuable classic, or 4) superior to others in its broad classification. Your results may differ from CR Evaluators or other researchers on any product because of differences in preferences, techniques, product batches, or environments. CR Foundation® is a tax-exempt, non-profit education and research organization which uses a unique volunteer structure to produce objective, factual data. All proceeds are used to support the work of CR Foundation®. ©2022 This report or portions thereof may not be duplicated without permission of CR Foundation®. Annual English language subscription: US\$229 worldwide, plus GST Canada subscriptions. Single issue: \$29 each. See [www.CliniciansReport.org](http://www.CliniciansReport.org) for additional subscription information.