

# Cash Is Not Always King... At Least When It Comes to Dental Scrap

by Dr. Marcus Barnett, DDS



About a month ago a gentleman stopped by our office and asked our front desk person if we had any old crowns and bridges that needed to be “cashed in”. The gentleman came to the back office and told me he was going to separate the crowns into two piles, one pile of gold crowns and one pile of semi-precious crowns. He told me most of the value would be in the pile of gold or high noble crowns and suggested the semi precious pile would be more of an afterthought. After he finished separating the crowns into two piles, he weighed each pile on a scale, marked down the weights of each pile and a cash dollar figure for the entire amount.

Probably like most of my colleagues, I really had no idea whether this offer was a low offer, a fair offer, or a great offer. How am I supposed to assess the value of a bag of extractions –some of which still have tooth fragments and porcelain attached- just by weight and the color of the metal? More importantly, how was this gentleman arriving at his offer? These internal questions led me to decline the cash offer on the spot and put the jar back in the cupboard for another day.

Approximately a few weeks later, one of the dental trade magazine featuring a cover story on scrap metal refining arrived in my mailbox. After reading the article I called the company featured on the cover- Scientific Metals- and spoke with the author of the article and of the principals of the company, Dave Weinberg. I asked Mr. Weinberg if he could tell me how much I would receive for my scrap if I provided him the weights on a gram basis of my scrap- which I had on a little piece of paper from the earlier in office offer. He proceeded to tell me that he couldn't do that because that would be like asking a car dealer how much they would pay for a car if I told the dealer how much the car weighed. Just like a car dealer could not make an offer on a car based on the weight of the car, a precious metals refiner cannot make an offer on dental scrap based on weight, Mr. Weinberg said. He asked me “Is the two thousand pound car a Rolls Royce or is it two thousand pounds of 1983 Chevrolet? Is your semiprecious pile high in palladium at \$650.00/oz or high in nickel- which is essentially worthless?”, he asked. I responded that I had no idea. He continued to tell me that the only (emphasis on “only”) way to determine the value of a pile of dental scrap is to melt and assay the lot.

After I told Mr. Weinberg what the cash offer was and how many grams I had, I heard a slight chuckle on the other end of the line. He expressed to me “ Dr. Barnett, unless the extractions that you have are mostly non precious or come from prison inmates, I can pretty much guarantee you are going to receive quite a bit more than that cash offer. How much more I don't know, but I am fairly certain it will be more.” I asked about insurance and he told me that the package was insured. He added that once a package is scanned by Fedex at pickup, the company has had only one package lost out of many thousands and that if the package somehow got lost in transit, Scientific Metals would at least remit the amount of the cash offer I had received. So, with little downside and some pretty decent upside I sent in my package to be melted and assayed. About 10 days later, Mr Weinberg emailed me that the assay was ready and that value of my scrap was \$2206.34 with over \$600.00 of that amount coming from the palladium content. I went back to my little piece of paper given to me from the cash offer received a few weeks earlier. The note read “Total Value- \$1000.00” –Less than half of the actual value received. ■

## Product Contact

For more information about Scientific Metals, please call 888-949-0008 or visit [www.scientificmetals.com](http://www.scientificmetals.com).

## Author's Bio

**Dr. Marcus Barnett** is a general dentist who has practiced in the Ozark/Niza MO area since 1984. Dr. Barnett also has held positions with Greater Springfield Dental Society and the Children's Smile Center Board in Ozark to treat under privileged children.