It is very difficult to escape from your professional status

An interview with practice manager Gary Smith, Australia

Gary Smith is well aware of the shifting demands practitioners are facing today. Increasing service levels, changing expectations of patients, and achieving a competitive edge through up-to-date technology and procedures place increasing pressure on health care professionals in terms of both their time and resources, he said. At the recent Australian Dental Congress in Brisbane, Dental Tribune Asia Pacific had the opportunity to talk to him about this subject, and why new technology might not necessarily help reduce the burden.

How do new technologies influence the work of clinicians? Are they actually time-saving tools as advertised or do they add even more stress, since practitioners have to constantly keep up and engage with the latest developments?

Gary Smith: The changing expectations of patients are one of the greatest challenges the industry has faced over the years. Patients’ demands are increasing, along with their expectations of the level of service to be provided. The acceptance of the level provided by dental practitioners at times may differ from the level of service the patient actually expects, however.

Are practitioners today more likely to neglect their work-life balance in favour of patients? Does the changing lifestyle demand that we sacrifice family and friends and spend all our free time working on patients?

Gary Smith: The intrusion of government’s and health insurers’ requirements has changed over the years, and believe that the provision of services will become more complicated as a result of further involvement of these two groups. Of course, one of the greatest challenges remains the running of a small to medium enterprise. This, as well as the increasing red tape and making a profit, will always pose a challenge.

For too long in the health care profession have we allowed the tail to wag the dog. The intrusion of government’s and health insurers’ requirements has changed over the years, and I believe that the provision of services will become more complicated as a result of further involvement of these two groups. Of course, one of the greatest challenges remains the running of a small to medium enterprise. This, as well as the increasing red tape and making a profit, will always pose a challenge.

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