In the centre of attention – How to run a patient centered dental clinic

By Eniko Simon

D uring any work advising dental practices, many practice owners complain about not having enough patients, or that patients do not return for treatment. It is a common problem in any dental business.

In this article I wish to share some tips on how to reduce these problems and explain how could a patient centered clinic management approach enhance patient journey and aid the success of a dental business.

Treatment Acceptance

Whenever we decide to buy a product or a service we do it for one simple reason; we decide to buy it as it offers a solution for our problems. We buy a laptop as we want to work on the go, we buy a mobile phone so people can reach us anywhere.

Dentistry is no different – your patients will buy your treatment as long as it provides a solution when you understand the problem.

• Offer solutions – as soon as you understand the patient’s concern offer a solution that is clearly solves the problem by highlighting the benefits of the treatment.
• By having a dental implant we achieve a fix, stable, long term solution to replace a missing tooth/teeth.
• Reassurance – To reassure your patient show before and after pictures to allow them to visualise the potential benefits of the treatment. Provide them with testimonials from other patients that have gone through the same procedure.
• Make the treatment possible – Here we are talking about the financial side. This is the most challenging part; you should not provide your services too cheaply as by this you as a dentist under value yourself, however we need to make it possible for the patient to afford the treatment.

So, the treatment coordinator role has grown steadily in the US and UK in the past 10 years.

The treatment coordinator is not only there to assist the dentist in preparing and presenting the treatment plan but also increasing the treatment conversion by providing an enhanced patient journey / patient experience in the dental clinic.

New patient consultation

The first consultation with the treatment coordinator is an informal chat between the patient and your treatment coordina-

tor (TCC) when the TCO asks questions to find out the dental concerns of the patient and introduces the clinic to the patient. It is really the first step to build rapport and make the patient feel comfortable in your clinic.

This consultation should be a free consultation to your new patient that you can schedule before the clinical consultation.

Build rapport

The treatment coordinator assists the dentist in preparing the treatment plan and in present-
ing the treatment plan to the patient. She also spends more time with the patient after the treatment plan has been presented to answer any further questions the patient may have and discuss payment options.

This discussion can also help to overcome any objections or doubts the patient may still have. The treatment coordinator should be a trusted contact who is there to support the patient all the way through the journey within the clinic.

Keeping in touch

The treatment coordinator should be the person who follows up with the patients – after treatment planning, making the appointments and treating the patient. This is how I am happy to answer any questions.

I believe the treatment coordinator greatly helps to reduce the dentists’ non-clinical time with the patient, helps to provide an outstanding patient care in your clinic and it’s an increased treatment acceptance and increased profit.

If you wish to implement the role of a treatment coordina-
tor or would like to get to know more about how a TCO could help your clinic, please contact me – I am happy to answer any questions.

Contact Information

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Preparing for the worst

By Fiona Stuart-Wilson

Each year some practice

to be seen and cared for during this time. All this means that a practice should always have a plan should disaster strike. You might this sort of thing could never happen to your practice but it could.

Your practice should have a business continuity to enable it to continue to function and sur-
vive a disaster, so here are some things every dentist and man-
ger should consider.

1. What could go wrong?

Disasters by their very nature are usually unexpected but that does not mean we should not try to forecast some of the greater risks that we face.

Think through some of the risks to your practice and what these might mean for the practice. This could include accidents such as fire, natural disaster, loss of key members of staff or crime.

2. How safe is practice property?

Make sure your practice is as prepared as it can be to survive a disaster. Carry out a regular check on how secure your build-
ing, equipment, computer sys-
tems, records and website are.

For instance how many people have access to the burglar alarm code or keys? How often is the code changed? Are valuable documents such as vat sub-
sert or left in a drawer?

If you haven’t already, consider photographing all of your valu-
ables and equipment for insur-
ance purposes. Make sure you have copies of key documents such as insur-
ance policies. Make sure these are in a safe place that more than one trusted person knows about.

3. Where could we work from?

If disaster strikes your patients depends on you to take care and you still need to run your dental business. You should have arrangements in place now for an alternative location to treat patients or at least send them to the in event that you cannot see them in your own practice.

It’s not just the clinical side of things either. You also need to think about where you will carry on with the non-clinical business of your practice, such as contacting patients, arranging or cancelling appointments, administration, and paying bills and staff.

This might of course be your home but if your information and data are not on the Cloud, make sure your backup operations site-

4. Do our staff know what to do?

Make sure that your team knows what your disaster plan is and when and where they should relocate to work in the event of an emergency.

5. How will we pay the bills and keep going?

If you have to leave your prac-
tice premises you won’t know how long it will be before you can return. If you have to leave them in a hurry, take the prac-
tice cheque book, debit and credit cards and keep enough cash on hand to meet emergency cash-
flow needs.

6. How will we tell the patients?

You will need to let patients know quickly in the event of an emergency or disaster, as they need to be reassured, told what to do and where to go. Make sure for example you have an arrangement in place with your website provider so that they can put this information on the home page of the website as quickly as possible. Save time later by writing that information copy now! It should include your emergency contact information, details of your backup surgery premises, and what to do about appointments. You can also use social media to get the word out about your emergency arrange-
ments.

Just as we buy insurance hoping we will never need to make a claim, so we know that a business in a safe place that more than one trusted person knows about.

About the Author

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