Taking technology forward – technicians and technical skills

Another article from the Dental Laboratories Association: this month on keeping technical skills up to date and CPD

Competition is a relatively new phenomenon in dentistry. Twenty or thirty years ago most patients who needed a dentist approached the local surgery with no thought of seeking a second opinion, took what was on offer and went contentedly on their way.

Not any more. Today's patients come to dentistry and treatments, are prepared to travel to the best deal, and thanks to the media's new found interest in dentistry have a far greater knowledge of different procedures and awareness of what is possible in terms of improving their appearance. And the tentacles of competition reach beyond the high street – technicians too have a responsibility to constantly hone their skills to ensure the practice they serve maintain a competitive edge and keep up to date with the latest developments in materials and methods.

All dentists seek to offer a wide spectrum of treatment options, each reflecting the highest standards of professional care. Technicians have the same ambition; to create protheses and appliances of the highest quality which satisfy patient expectations and complement the talents of their clinician partners. However, capable ambitions need knowledge. To ensure the mid-field and the striker are playing the same tactical game, both must pay attention to the team talk. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) keeps the different elements of the dental team not only up to date but communicating in the same language.

Learning new skills is personally challenging and commercially productive. For practices which engage with and exploit the latest developments as they occur, unlimited progress becomes possible. Staff are highly motivated, the patients benefit, and profitability soars. In many respects, technicians man the engine room driving the practice forward; advanced clinical protocols within the surgery cannot succeed without the support and certified, proven expertise of the technician behind the scenes.

Undertaking CPD, with its emphasis on promoting understanding of key aspects such as new materials and handling features, broadens the technician's knowledge and practical abilities. Another area rapidly increasing in importance for all technicians is public relations. While technicians themselves rarely have face to face contact with the patients, their specialist knowledge, which is not shared by the 'front line' members of the dental team, has led to a recommendation that they pursue the same CPD syllabus in legal and ethical issues and complaints handling as other members of the team. In the 21st Century, communication skills have a more prominent role than ever before in every professional accomplishment and then moving onto business achievement.

It's aimed at everyone associated with management including practice managers, principals, senior nurses and receptionists, and to encourage team development, BDPMA members can extend their privileged rate to other members of their teams.

Speakers include Stephen Hancock OBE, Coach Clare McNombre, representatives from BDA Good Practice, Investors in People, NHS BSA and NHS PCT, and colleagues Shaerena and Phil Loughnane from the award-winning Chipping Manor Dental Practice.

Boost your career

What happens when we meet a challenge at work? We usually feel uncomfortable to tackle it. It could be a new payroll system, determining budgets or creating a marketing plan but whatever it is, it fills us with fear.

The BDPMA's recommended pay scale for 2008 was sent out to all 800 members of the Association in January along with its ten top tips for successful negotiation. The purpose of this much sought after document is to promote the supportership of principal and manager. The pay scale clarifies the skills and responsibilities required to earn a specific level of remuneration and that's got to be good for both the principal and the manager. The pay scale is part of any new-member pack and is available to non-members for a fee of £20.

Dental Management

In February the BDPMA launches its latest vehicle to support managers of practice: Dental Management. The 28-page, members-only publication is crammed full of tips, advice and articles to help managers, manage more effectively. No other publication is dedicated to the development of management skills in this way!

Each issue provides one hours verifiable CPD so for BDPMA members that's four hours of verifiable CPD per year just from reading Dental Management. To receive your copy each quarter, join the BDPMA.

The British Dental Practice Managers' Association is growing quickly because it fulfils the needs of managers striving to climb that ladder of success. Take your first step towards management success by joining now.

Contact the BDPMA on 01452 886 564 or by emailing info@bdpma.org.uk

The BDPMA means business

If you're in need of an inspirational boost, the BDPMA has events and training courses to suit everyone involved in dental practice management, says Vikki Harper.