A team approach

To generate a loyal customer base, the entire practice team must make the patient’s experience worthwhile, not just the dentist. Dr Riz Syed explains.

In order to succeed in implant treatment, dentists must look beyond their own skills and expertise in terms of what they can offer patients. It is of paramount importance for the whole team to act as a single functioning unit for complete patient care.

I have heard many skilled surgeons complaining of the lack of patients being seen in their clinics despite heavy marketing, which costs valuable time and money. A motivated team is a reflection on the surgeon, indicating what they can offer and what care patients will receive when coming to the clinic.

The receptionist

The initial contact point for every patient is the receptionist and key areas of interest include how they deal with visitors and what level of knowledge they possess. It is important to train your receptionist in what each aspect of implant dentistry involves. This includes what an implant is, the procedure, post-operative care and the length of time involved.

Having the right implant system is crucial, but even with a solution from a leading implant company such as Nobel Biocare, patients won’t benefit if the receptionist cannot answer their questions.

Dental nurse

Having mentored many surgeons across London and the Home Counties, I see many nurses not adequately trained for the procedures carried out in their surgeries. It is important not to see implants as part of routine dentistry but as a specialist field. Nurses’ training courses (basic and advanced) are readily available and I would recommend that implant surgeons ensure that their nurses are sent on these courses. They should be aware of each component of an implant, the stages involved and the time frame.

Hygienist

The team approach extends beyond the receptionist and nurse to other specialties within dentistry. My initial therapy for a patient usually involves them seeing my hygienist first to maintain and achieve a healthy environment in which I can operate. Implantology is often seen by surgeons as an isolated field, dealing with a specific site. A full comprehensive treatment should be given to restore the mouth with implants complementing this treatment.

It is also important for the hygienist to secure the oral health of the patient and reinforce oral hygiene techniques following implant therapy.

Dr Riz Syed

qualified at the Royal London Hospital in 1999, runs a referral clinic in Islington and Walton-on-Thames, and was one of the first surgeons in the country to use NobelGuide. He is a mentor for Nobel Biocare, helping to train UK implant surgeons. Regularly consulted for complex treatment-planning cases, Dr Syed lectures on guided implant surgery. He is a member of the Association of Dental Implantology, the International Congress of Oral Implantologists and Fellow of the Royal Society of Medicine. His practice includes sinus grafting, surgical crown lengthening and hard and soft tissue grafting, and has been awarded the Clinic of Excellence in Implant Dentistry. To contact Dr Syed, email rizsyed@hotmail.co.uk or call 01923 223479 (Mulberry Dental Care) or 0207 2269797 (AG Dentistry).