Make technology work for you

If you’ve computer systems in place and your staff are well trained to use them, your practice will run like a dream, says Anita Jupp

Technology is here to stay and will continue to become more sophisticated and advanced. With many continued technological advances, it’s sometimes hard to keep up and unless your practice is fully prepared, stress and inefficiency may follow. Unfortunately, the major problem for most practices is the lack of team training in necessary technology. Dentists invest a great deal of money in technology and it’s vital to receive a return on your investment. Equipment that sits collecting dust is a waste of money. Computers especially are under utilised to monitor the success of a practice and find out where there’s lost revenue. In addition, utilising the computer for marketing purposes is inexpensive, fast and efficient yet rarely taken advantage of.

Team training on computer systems

Full and efficient training with computers makes for less office stress, more organised systems and a more efficient office.

One office I recently worked with could not retrieve proper contact lists from their computer. It turns out that the team was not inputting the correct contact codes so they could not generate an accurate recall list. This simple computer input error affected hundreds of patients and cost thousands of pounds in lost revenue over the year until the error was fixed.

And it’s not just about lost revenue; it’s also about quality patient care. It’s vital that we promptly follow up with patients to show them that we care. It’s also not just about tracking and monitoring; it’s about evaluating what you have and implementing systems to get results from follow up. Doctors invest in the best technology and clinical programs, but more importantly, they must make an investment in team training to complement the technology.

You should be tracking patients each month for the following:
- New Patients
- Missed appointments
- No show and will call back patients
- Incomplete perio
- Incomplete treatment
- Over due recare patients
- Inactive recare list and overdue list

You should be tracking the following statistics for discussion at team meetings:
- Treatment presented
- Treatment accepted & value
- Treatment declined
- Pre-determinations sent
- Pre-determinations booked
- Number of recalls pre-appointed
- Recall patients due this month
- Overdue recalls
- Patients, that have not been into the practice, and long overdue for recall appointment for one year or more.

If these things are not being done, then your team is not as efficient as they should be. To combat this common problem, it’s advisable to train someone in the office to become the office “computer expert.” This person keeps up to date with computer updates and makes sure the entire team is trained.

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