Set aside team training time for any person on staff who is not yet fully proficient with your system. They should set aside one to two hours each week until your team is fully proficient. Make up a training sheet and give to all the team members to plan proper training time. Everyone on the team should know at least the basic functions of the computer system and everyone should have full knowledge of computer systems where their specific job areas are concerned.

Marketing with your computer system

Your computer system, when used efficiently, can be one of your best marketing assets. Marketing is not always about sending sparkly newsletters and flashy brochures; it’s also about consistent patient contact and quality care. Consistent contact and quality care can be achieved by sending out the following on a regular basis:

• ‘Welcome to our office’ letter
• ‘Pre-medication’ letter
• ‘Before treatment’ letter (see figure 1.1)
• ‘After treatment’ letter (see figure 1.2)
• ‘Predetermination follow up’ letter
• ‘Thank you for your referral’ letter
• ‘Recall’ letter
• ‘Periodontal treatment’ letter

Let your patients know that you are ahead of the game when it comes to their dental care. Let your letters say ‘We know how to take care of you!’ Send out your letters and notices consistently and use your computer as a primary marketing tool and an enhancer of case acceptance.

Enhance case acceptance

Dental technology has grown in leaps and bounds over the past 10 years. It’s now possible to show your patient how their smile will look after extensive treatment, a tool that most dentists only dreamed of having at their disposal in the past. Now that we have these wonderful tools available, I find that many dentists don’t use them to their fullest extent.

Imaging systems are a fantastic way for using a patient’s own photo to provide a realistic outcome of the treatment. Giving your patient this realistic view is probably the best way to show them how beautiful their own smile could be. When printing photos, put in a disclaimer that the images were produced by a computer and that final results may vary.

If you have an imaging system in your practice, using it to the fullest extent would include:

• Providing your patient with their before and after photos in their take home patient portfolio
• Before and after photo attached to a follow up treatment pending letter
• Before and after photo attached to a treatment acceptance or undecided letter

*Not a complete list, just a selection.*
• Before and after books and photos
• Computerised patient education
• Before and after DVDs and videos
• Intraoral cameras to show patients treatment options

There are many fantastic imaging systems on the market today and I highly recommend that each practice make a formal investment in this kind of technology to help improve patient education and case acceptance rates.

To complement your imaging system, incorporate PowerPoint presentations for your patients – a simple presentation that you can make on an office computer to a patient in your consultation room. PowerPoint presentations can also be uploaded to your website for patients to download at their leisure. If all possible, it would be nice to have a terminal with your presentations available in the greeting area for patients to look through.

If you’re not overly computer literate and don’t have the time or the staff to invest in creating your own presentations, there are a number of companies who design presentation templates specifically for dental practices.

PowerPoint presentation suggestions:
1. New Patients: A practice overview
   • Welcome!
   • Meet the dentist
   • Meet the staff
   • Office photos
   • Sterilisation procedures

2. Children and dentistry: what every parent should know
   • Tooth care for babies
   • Thumb sucking
   • Sports and dentistry
   • Mouth guards
   • Preventive dental care for children
   • Proper brushing and flossing for children
   • Our preventive dentistry care
   • Our No Cavity Club

5. General patient education: cosmetic and restorative dentistry
   • Introduction to ‘cosmetic dentistry’
   • White restorations
   • Teeth whitening
   • Crown and bridge
   • Orthodontics
   • Implants
   • Tooth contouring
   • Root canal treatment
   • Periodontal therapy
   • Preventive care program

Using the internet
In this day and age, a dental practice website is a necessity. Many of your new patients may still be finding you through the Yellow Pages, but you can be sure that the internet savvy will be seeking information about you and your practice online.

Developing a website is a big project and one that is out of the technical comfort zone of many dentists and staff. However, for a reasonable fee there are plenty of independent website designers who can help you to create the perfect patient website.

Reason for a website
• Patients: new, existing and potential. People are looking online!
• An excellent marketing tool for your services
• Providing information and answering questions
• Image: confident, up to date, successful
• The internet is here – it’s staying, so get on board!

The British Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry (BACD) is a non-profit making organisation established to provide training for dentists, technicians and all members of the dental team seeking to respond to the burgeoning demand for cosmetic dental treatments. For further information about attending the 2008 BACD Conference in November please call Suzy Rowlands on 020 8241 8526 or visit www.bacd.com

About the author
Anita Jupp is an international lecturer and practice coach, with the ADEI (www.learndental.com). Anita brings over 30 years dental experience to the table and has helped thousands of professionals to reach their full practice potential.