Customer satisfaction

When patients return to the surgery after treatment because they are not comfortable it can be all too easy to make assumptions that may not necessarily be correct, particularly when the patient has just been fitted with full/full dentures.

Consider the case of the young dentist who had just made a set of complete dentures for an elderly patient. The patient thought they were unsatisfactory and wrote a strong letter of complaint demanding a refund. The dentist who had done his best work was somewhat frustrated. This had been a particularly difficult case because the patient had an atrophic lower ridge and so it had been less than easy to get a good impression and to create a good fit. The dentist personally telephoned the patient and offered to see him again for a review. He adjusted the new set of dentures and offered to remake the lower denture or to refer the patient for a specialist opinion if preferred.

The patient was satisfied with the upper but the lower denture was still uncomfortable and so he opted to have it remade. After the new lower denture was fitted, there was silence from the patient. Although he had been given a review appointment the patient did not return and so the dentist telephoned to ask how he was getting on with the new lower denture. The patient said he was still unable to wear it.

Patient value

The dentist offered a full refund, which the patient did not immediately accept. He received a nice letter from the patient a week later indicating that while he was unable to wear the denture, he did not want a refund. The patient was grateful for the time and effort the dentist had spent trying to get a satisfactory result.

The dentist's response had been entirely professional and the patient appreciated that. In this case, it was unnecessary to assume that such an honest and caring approach would not be valued by the patient.