Exploring the gaps

Okay so there's a credit crunch going on so it's the wrong time to sign up for courses right? Wrong! If you've got gaps in your appointment book then you need to find out why.

Nobody teaches you how to run a business, or tell you how to really make money in this profession. Welcome then to a course launched especially to address these issues.

Now in its third year the Eastman CPD Finance and Practice Management Course focuses on the practical application of financial and management techniques to dental practices. It looks beyond the theory and explores the practical applications of how to manage your practice more profitably.

Spread over five months, and suitable for the newly qualified to those thinking of retirement, the six-day course helps practice owners and associates understand financial and employment issues. It is specially designed so participants have the time to apply new practice techniques, and discuss them with the group at each subsequent meeting.

As well as addressing fundamental principles, terminology is explained, and then applied to dental practices. The interactive days involve analysing sets of accounts, and debating whether to buy the practice they relate to. Participants would also learn to prepare budgets, set fees and prepare employment contracts.

At the beginning of each day participants are invited to ask questions on any subject they want help with. The day is then structured to address the specific needs raised.

The course also examines employment law, where participants review adverts, recruitment questions, offer letters, references including contracts for salaried staff and associates.

Early registration is advised as places are limited in order to assist group exercises and encourage informal discussion.

For further information please contact the programme administrator Marjorie Kelly on: 020 7905 1234 or email: m.kelly@eastman.ucl.ac.uk.
I’m watching you

Patients are very astute when it comes to determining how much you care about them and their treatment, says Mike Wanless, who says there are ways of learning how to show them your sympathy effectively.

Earlier in this series it was stated that patients assess us largely by how they perceive we care. In this article, we will look at how we can show that we care. You care for your patients as do all your fellow students, and although some of us are naturally better at showing it, it’s a skill that can be learned by anybody. So how can we show that we care?

When patients assess us they make value judgments about what we are like as a person. As human beings, we all do this all the time. Albert Mehrabian (1971) conducted research into how people decide if they like another person. This research is often misquoted, but has been successfully applied to other value judgments. When deciding if we like someone it is based on three communication channels, as we decide if we like the messages they convey to us.

We base approximately seven per cent of our judgment on the words the other person says. Thirty per cent is based on para-linguistics which is how we speak. This includes voice tone, whether our voice is monotonous or goes up and down, loudness, speed of speech, accent and the little words we say like ‘uhm’ and ‘ah’. The remaining 55 per cent is made up by body language, including facial expression. So how can we demonstrate that we care through body language?

Showing the signs

If you imagine that you are looking at yourself in a mirror, what sort of face are you pulling when you try to show that you care? Using facial expression appropriately is a strong indicator of caring. Have you ever had a conversation with someone who shows very little facial expression? If so you may have sensed them as being cold or uncaring. It does not mean that they were uncaring, but that is how they looked. Maintaining good eye contact is also an indicator of caring, particularly if the person is looking at you.

Gestures and body position also convey strong messages. A closed body position (with arms and/or legs crossed) can be read as indicating defensiveness. Simply uncrossing makes us seem more open to what the patient is saying. Open hand movements also indicate openness and genuineness. Just watch the hand movements of a politician. Many are trained in how to use their hands to show what a ‘genuine’ caring person they are.

In future articles, we will look at how we can show that we are listening to what patients tell us. We will also look at how we can respond verbally and nonverbally to show that we appreciate how they feel, which is a powerful tool in relaxing the nervous patient and developing rapport.

Reference