Back to basics – keep it simple works….but technology is nice too

Mhari Coxon discusses technology and innovation

It is so easy to get caught up in new innovation and technology. I love shiny things and am drawn to them. And, innovation makes ours and our patients lives much easier. But the mistake we often make is to start to drop the basic staple fundamentals of prevention. This can lead to our patients becoming un-healthy again and, in worst case scenario, have active dental disease.

When we have been working in the same practice for a long time, it can be hard to change or add to your clinical work, as patients have become familiar with how it works just now. Once we have established the rhythm of our appointments it can be difficult to add to or change our clinical behaviour.

Blame someone else and prepare the patient for the change

This makes it so much easier on both you and the patient. So...blame CQC and their new patient centred lifelong care plans. Or...blame the Department of Health and their De-

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toolkit and how we have to be evidence based. Neither of these bodies will be bothered and you have your excuse for change.

Prepare the patient for the change. If you write or call to confirm their appointment, explain that this time we will be using a special dye that will show us how we can help you to clean better at home and act as a road map so we can clean your mouth really well. reassure them that it will all come off before they leave the surgery. Giving the patient notice of the change will reduce the negative response you can get with no prior warning.

Delegate to an enthusiastic team member for best results.

I love to disclose my patients. It makes me happy that they care about what the outcome will be. I like that entire families compete with each other to get the lowest scores. It makes it relevant and fun for them. So, when you are disclosing you need to be efficient, neat and enthusiastic. Depending on your role in the team this can be easier for some than others. Patients have a different relationship with different team members and you can often find that the dentist is not the person best placed to carry out this work.

Use technology too.

I find one of the best people to do the disclosing and digital photographs of this is one of the dental nursing team. They can even provide the oral hygiene advice to the patient in a non clinical environment. This can make it much easier for the patient to listen, relax and respond to advice. The digital photographs act as a record of oral hygiene advice being given and can be sent to the patient be email to help them remember where to brush. My friend Fiona, who has recently re-established her love of disclosing, goes one step further and films the patient using the correct product and technique on the areas they need to concentrate on their own phone. Then they can play it back at home to reinforce the new routine.

About the author

Mhari has 20 years experience in dentistry, working as a nurse, receptionist, oral health advisor and ultimately hygienist in a variety of practice environments. She is passionate about her profession. At present, she works as Senior Professional Relations Manager for Philips Oral Healthcare and clinically as a hygienist in central London. From Chairing the London BSDHT for 3 years, and working as an MD, Mhari excels at motivating and co-ordinating a team and utilising skills, developing leadership and training. Throughout her career Mhari has developed hygiene protocols and plans in practices which have continued to be used with great success. Mhari is Clinical Director for CPDforDCP Ltd, a training company offering motivational and interactive development courses to the dental team. A keen writer, Mhari is a columnist for Dental Health, the British Society of Hygienists and Therapists (BSDHT) Journal, has a conversational column in Dental Tribune and writes articles for many other publications and online sites. As a speaker Mhari has presented regionally, nationally and internationally for many groups including Talking Points for Dentists, the British Orthodontic Society Specialist group, the BSDHT, the International Symposium of Dental Hygiene, the dentistry show and many others. In 2006 she was the Probe Awards hygienist of the year, and was highly commended in 2010. 2011 saw her placed 15 in the Dentistry Top 50 most influential people in the UK.