Keep in regular contact with your patients

Cathy Johnson looks at high quality communication for busy dentists

Are you so busy that the mere thought of marketing has you retreating to the sanctuary of your surgery? With so many aspects to their job, dentists rarely have ‘spare’ time and often marketing is considered a spare time task. Yet communicating regularly with existing patients and engaging prospective patients can be vital to the continued growth of a practice.

If the only communication with patients outside of the practice is via a recall letter, the relationship may become insecure and open to invasion by other practices in the area. A newsletter is an excellent way of keeping in touch, making your patients feel valued and bringing them up to date with what your practice offers. You add value to the service you provide by giving something extra.

Articles in a newsletter can be of general interest as well as bringing the availability of new treatments to the attention of readers. This will, in turn, encourage them to visit your practice to discuss treatment options.

How many of your patients know that implants are a permanent solution to missing teeth? Do they know that the staining of their teeth can be corrected?

A trigger to book

A feature on whitening or other cosmetic dental treatments, could be the perfect catalyst for a patient to make a booking if they read it before a special event such as a birthday, wedding, graduation day, Mothering Sunday, Father’s Day and so on. Alternatively, somebody might book the treatment as a gift for a friend or relative.

Patients are also more likely to visit your practice regularly

Clinical Governance including Patient Quality Measures - Is your practice compliant?

Are you waiting to find out when the Care Quality Commission* inspect your practice?

Have you addressed all 28 CQC outcomes?

Your compliance with Clinical Governance and Patient Outcomes will be questioned with the introduction of the Care Quality Commission; HTM 01-05 and the increase in PCT practice inspections.

Would you like to know how you would fare when your practice is inspected and have the opportunity to take corrective action? The DBG Clinical Governance Assessment is the all important experience of a practice audit visit rather than the reliance on a self audit which can lead to a false sense of compliance. The assessment is designed to give you reassurance that you have fulfilled your obligations and highlight any potential problems. We will provide help and advice on the latest guidance throughout the visit.

The assessment will take approximately four hours of your Practice Manager’s time depending on the number of surgeries and we will require access to all areas of your practice. A report will be despatched to you confirming the results of our assessment. If you have an inspection imminent then we suggest that you arrange your DBG assessment at least one month before the inspection to allow you time to carry out any recommendations if required. Following the assessment you may wish to have access to the DBG Clinical Governance Package with on-line compliance manuals.

For more information and a quote contact the DBG on 0845 00 66 112

*England only.

www.thedbg.co.uk

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also act as a gentle reminder of the benefits of creating and maintaining a healthy, beautiful smile.

Delegate the task
Writing your own newsletter probably feels like one of those tasks you will just never find the ‘spare’ time for. Or maybe you will manage one but not produce them regularly – which is almost worse than not doing one at all. A customised patient newsletter lifts this burden and means you save precious time and get your practice noticed with the minimum of effort. Accurate, informative and patient-friendly features are written for you. When branded with your logo (which will be distinctive and expertly designed if you followed the advice I gave last month), contact details, and personalised with, say, 200 words of news about your practice, it will appear totally bespoke.

The perfect size
I recommend double-sided A4 as the best format and the newsletter should be stylishly designed and beautifully printed on high quality coated paper. Ideally, newsletters should be distributed twice a year – in spring and autumn. This means they have a good chance of triggering those cosmetic dentistry appointments ahead of special occasions.

Each newsletter, and past issues, can be uploaded for viewing on your practice website thus potentially attracting new patients as well as keeping you in touch with existing ones.

If you are a busy dentist with little or no spare time and want to attract more patient enquiries as soon as possible, a customised patient newsletter is the perfect solution.

Patient newsletters not only strengthen the patient/practice connection, but also provide an involved touch with what’s going on and generally have closer contact. Also, they will probably choose, and stay with, a practice that extends a hand to communicate with them, as opposed to one that assumes a distant, hands-off approach.

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About the author
Cathy Johnson specialises in design for dentists and will design your practice image, stationery, welcome packs, referral packs, external signage and website to raise the profile of your practice and attract the patients you are looking for. She also writes and produces a biannual patient newsletter, branded for you to send to your patients. Cathy’s success is built on more than 25 years of experience as a graphic designer combined with in-depth understanding of the needs of the dental profession. She and her team are based in London and work with practices across the UK and abroad. Working with single practitioners through to large dental groups, all services are tailor-made to suit each individual practice.

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