**NAVIGATING THIS EVER-CHANGING CLIMATE - COVID19**

Society right now is being placed in a cultural time out. A cultural time-out that is not a welcomed one at that!

This is a time of self-doubt and fear and we know that uncertainty can paralyze and blind us to the good options that are available. During this COVIDI9 virus I am reminded by what the great **Desmond Tutu said, “HOPE IS BEING ABLE TO SEE THAT THERE IS LIGHT DESPITE ALL OF THE DARKNESS.”**

Don’t get me wrong, I am afraid. But I choose to see the hope for now and in the future. We can only focus on what we can control. We can’t change the economy or the COVID19 pandemic. We can only change what is within our practice. With our practice being closed there are several activities you can be focusing on before we re-open.

Many of you have been doing a “ton of clinical continuing education.” That is fine. In my opinion, when we re-open our practices, I won’t be concerned about any of my clients’ clinical skills. I will be concerned about dentists and their business focuses. SO, for now our focus needs to be directed toward your business operational systems.

1. **Vision =** Keep true to your vision for your practice; set goals going forward
2. **Computer Reports =** These valuable tools will provide you a baseline analysis of where you were prior to the crisis. This will give you a road map for what to do before and after you re-open
3. **Cash Flow Analysis =** Looking at your checkbook balance might be frightening, but it is necessary. Review your Profit and Loss Statement or the historical data of your accounts payables to determine your true BARE $#@ MINIMUM, also known as your breakeven or the bottom line to keep the doors open.
4. **Business Systems =** Understand your historical data and the direction you want to go in the future.

Now is the opportunity to evaluate the practice’s “what Is” with a fresh set of eyes. Look at your business as it has never been looked at before. It is the *Baseline Data* of were all at prior to the crisis! You are always busy with patients and generally never have the time, now you do! We all get a baseline in our personal lives - of our blood pressure, blood sugar, mammogram, PSA test, etc. So why not examine your own data at this time before you re-open your practice.

1. **Vision -** Write a vision or if you have one already, revisit it and make appropriate changes.

When beginning the vision process focus on how you can utilize each of your staff members strengths and how you can all work together. Ask yourself and staff why do patients come to your practice? What are the key components that make this a great place to work? Then ask yourself what are the internal challenges that can create potential barriers to achieving your vision? After that is complete, then effectively communicate that picture of future with high hopes and urgency to your team. This can be done via a zoom or join.me meeting.

1a) Communicate with your team weekly. Use email, texts, or personal calls. Speak from the heart, let them know what you are doing, how your family is coping and share hope. Also, if you can financially afford it, send a gift card for groceries to each member of your team.

1b) Communicate with your patients weekly. Ideally, you want to use email or text. If you don’t have patients email addresses, that should be one of your priorities upon your re-opening.

Some suggestions while isolated in your home:

* Send a (email) letter to explain to patients how your practice has followed the guidelines of ADA, CDA etc. regarding closing of the office. In addition, how you are treating emergency patients only.
* Explore the use of Teledentistry (Virtual Consults [www.yourvirtualconsult.com](http://www.yourvirtualconsult.com)) is a great site to help you navigate this Teledentistry world.
* Share with your patients how dental practices have always used hospital standards in regard to sterilization and patient safety. Indicate any new updates which will be implemented based on OSHA standards and always with the patient’s best interest.
* The next week’s letter might be more personal, how you are doing, what you are doing with your family, how are you dealing with the social distancing etc. Have you started any family traditions or what traditions have you continued? How are the staff doing? Patients like to hear all the details and like to know you are struggling just like they are. Always remember to express hope.
* The next week’s letter should be about how anxious you are about re-opening and what will happen then. How excited you are about seeing all of them again, how you will be allowing time for re-connecting and the spacing of patients, so we obey safety guidelines moving forward.

**2) Computer reports -** Outstanding Insurance Report - By this point you should have already generated an outstanding insurance report from your software. This report will show all outstanding monies due to you by each carrier and is broken down by current through 90+ days. This is money due to you now and will assist in covering cost of living now. You now can invest time in your practice, so get get into the business side. Generate an Accounts Receivable report and determine who has been sent multiple statements with outstanding balances more than 90 days. NO harsh statements but do write a note asking for something.

2a) Determine the number of patients within the recare system. Why is this number important?

It will determine the number of hygienist/hygiene days needed

# of chairs needed to accommodate them

# of assistants needed

# of administrative team members needed

# of supplies, instruments etc.

Generate the recare report from one year ago to one year into the future of ALL patients except inactive; patients with and without a recall appointment EX: 04/13/2019-04/13/2021. This will provide the active patient base. Scheduled, Due and Overdue.

Based on the active patient totals you will need 1 day of hygiene for every 200 active patients, 800 patients will require 4 days of hygiene. In this current climate you will need to get the hygiene schedule filled immediately as this will feed the doctors schedule with patients that need dentistry. A few super hygiene days may be necessary to reschedule all of hygiene patients whose appointments were cancelled due to the pandemic.

2b) Determine how much open time in hygiene and dentistry you had BEFORE THE CRISIS.

Go to your appointment book and count every single unit of time that is open for each provider,

**3) Cash Flow Analysis -** Why is this important? There are many different actions that need to be assessed when you look at your profit and loss statement. What were your monthly expenses before the crisis?

3a) Have you contacted your landlord to ask about a deferment of your rent?

3b) Have you applied for any or all of the federal help, PPP, [Economic Injury Disaster Loan Program](https://www.benefits.gov/benefit/1504).

3c) Discuss with your accountant what you can be doing now, ideally overhead should be 80-61%, staff expenses should be 19-27% including taxes and benefits, rent 6-8%, supplies 6-7% etc.

**4) Business Systems -** Generate a Procedures by Provider report for the last 6 months prior to closing, and last year for the same 6-month period. Were you up, down or flat?

4a) Generate an outstanding treatment report for the last 6 months. Determine what is going to be done with the unscheduled treatment upon your return. Who is going to focus in on those patients versus who will focus in on recare patients overdue?

As you have probably been able to see there is a plethora of data you can be focusing in on regarding the business side of your practice. If you have any questions please email me or visit my website.



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