

It's all in the sequence: Practice management

With this editorial, our look at the sequential competencies of contemporary dentistry has come full circle, back to professionalism.

We arrive back at professionalism because a successful practice cannot be established without a personal and professional philosophy of dentistry upon which to build.

It is axiomatic that regardless of our knowledge and technical dental capabilities, we must establish and maintain a sound business operation to continue in practice. In fact, one definition of practice management is "those systems and processes that support the therapeutic interventions we offer our patients."

The fundamental components of practice management are:

1. Development of practice goals and plans
2. Selection and implementation of effective office systems
3. Knowledge that enables sound business decision making
4. Capable management of the business aspects of the practice
5. Ability to evaluate outcomes objectively and to act appropriately upon those evaluations
6. Capable management of personnel
7. Capable management of patient care
8. Capable management of the legal aspects of practice

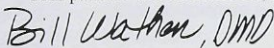
These components can be grouped into three basic groups of activities.

1. Establishing and maintaining a practice.
 - a. Develop a practice philosophy consistent with successful interrelationships with staff, patients, and peers.
 - b. Develop and implement agreements for all aspects of professional life.
 - c. Develop protocols for evaluation of practice location.
 - d. Develop a strategy for managing risk.

2. Developing and implementing sound business principles related to the administration of a professional practice.
 - a. Develop and revise policy and procedure manual.
 - b. Develop and implement office protocols that are compliant with rules, regulations, and procedures that protect the health and safety of both staff and patients.
 - c. Develop protocols for selection of advisors necessary for the efficient management of the practice.
 - d. Develop protocols for selection of various forms of business insurance and financial management.
 - e. Develop protocols for managing all patient information.
 - f. Develop and manage a professional marketing strategy.
 - g. Develop and implement quality assurance and assessment programs.
3. Developing and refining the attributes of an effective employer and leader.
 - a. Develop recruitment sources and strategies.
 - b. Develop adequate staff hiring, development, education, evaluation, and firing policies.
 - c. Develop excellent communication skills at all levels: peer, patient, staff, and public.

Over the past few months we have had a brief look at some of the critical aspects of a successful practice. The list is by no means complete and is simply intended to stimulate thinking and evaluation in the reader's mind. If you, your staff, and your patients are satisfied with your practice and patient outcomes, congratulations. If you see areas that can be improved, perhaps now is the time to begin that improvement.

Your patients will be better off, and so will you.



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