

CPD MADE EASY

Joanne Treweeks, Denplan Consultant in the West Midlands, discusses continuing professional development (CPD) for the whole practice team and shows how one practice manager in the area has taken things into her own hands.

I think it's fair to say that, when it comes to professional training, there are plenty of courses available for dentists to supplement their knowledge and skills. This has become even more relevant since the General Dental Council (GDC) made CPD a required aspect of working life. But what about the rest of the team?

With the current economic climate still anything but stable, it is easy to understand why some practice managers have put training and development on the 'back-burner' for the time being. However, it is refreshing to see that some practice managers are taking the initiative and doing something to ensure that CPD is brought to the forefront of practice life once again.

Taking things into your own hands

Claire Willetts, Practice Manager at the Haden Hill Dental in the West Midlands, is one such practice manager. She has been at the practice for over six years and was recently awarded a 'BDPMA and Henry [Schein Minerva](#) Career Development Grant' [for her](#) 500-word paper discussing the career development challenges dentistry faces in the future, from a Practice Manager's point of view.

Claire could not have been more thrilled with her achievement and told me: "I was so shocked and proud when I got the call to say I was getting one of the grants for my paper. I've got lots of big plans for the future and hope to put the money to good use at Haden Hill."

And here's Claire's grant-winning paper...

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES FACING PRACTICE MANAGERS?

The Business of Dentistry is changing rapidly and practice managers are at the forefront of ensuring these changes are instigated as smoothly and effectively as possible. The demands of the current challenging business environment, economic uncertainty, increased patient demands and expectations and professional regulations if not managed effectively can lead to a great level of stress and distress for all dental team members and practice owners.

Practice Managers are increasingly expected to work smart and not just work hard. They need to raise their game to keep at the forefront of Dentistry, maintain the reputation of the practice within the local community and deliver and improve on the level and quality of service that our existing clients have come to expect as well as ensuring the smooth day to day running of a dental practice. The idea that management is all about continuity and problem solving is now out dated. The modern 21st Century dental practice manager needs to look at improving on all aspects of the practice even when there seems to be no apparent problem. To do this we need to add new skills to our already long repertoire, creativity and lateral thinking are just a couple of examples.

New legislation such as the registration of dental care professionals, continuing professional development of all team members and the logistics about ensuring the key team members have the adequate facilities, time and resources to fulfil their CPD requirements whilst still providing the full service to the clients and where appropriate fulfilling contractual agreements with the local primary care trusts can cause logistical nightmares if no formal management or strategy is in place. Couple this with the HTM 01-05 regulations and aspiring to meet best practice and dental practice managers are being expected to juggle several balls in the air at the same time.

Creative and innovative management requires commitment and time. As a key team member, a dental practice manager needs to balance both the need to manage tactically on a day to day basis with the requirement to lead creatively and strategically for the future.

What are the challenges facing me personally as dental practice manager?

As a manager of a small single handed practice with a loyal patient base, you may think I have it easy as far as management challenges are concerned. I am the sole Dental nurse within our practice and thus have the added challenge of not only the day to day running of the practice but also being a key team member and provider of one of the essential services of the business. My list of responsibilities just seems to be endless at times.

For me, Dentistry is not just a job, it is a way of life, 24/7 in some cases to ensure I guide our practice towards success using skills in finance, marketing, strategic planning, leadership, human resources, information technology, stock control and more,

My personal goals for 2010 are to implement strategies to help the practice improve teamwork, customer care, marketing and profitability within the dental practice through expansion. To implement strategies to help the whole dental team to develop their roles with the business and thus ensure that I am key to looking after the interests and well being of the whole practice team with the ultimate goal being the implementation of the practice principal's current business plan by achieving the addition of a new dimension to our customer care.

In short, if I meet the challenge then the practice is a success, if I fail, then I could always run away with the circus and capitalise on the juggling skills!!!!

Training courses

I am really proud of Claire as she has not only hit the nail on the head when it comes to the challenges of practice life, but she pro-actively gone out and managed to secure a £500 grant to help her team fulfill their training needs .

However, the fact of the matter is that not everyone can receive a grant, so it's really important that practice managers utilise helpful services and training to make their lives easier. Some payment plan providers offer tailor-made training days, which can incorporate modules suitable for the whole practice team; as well as offering verifiable CDP, so this can be a great place to start. Ultimately, CPD is a vital part of practice life and I believe it should be seen as an opportunity to improve your services, rather than a necessary evil.

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