

## **OH, WHAT A TANGLED WEB WE WEAVE**

**Tracy Cluett-Green, Key Client Consultant at Denplan, discusses dental website design and how an effective website can drive patients into your practice.**

I think it's fair to say that most dental practices with a website have outsourced the design and support of it to specialist providers. This can be an easy and efficient way to achieve an internet presence, but it's important that you're still aware of the regulations involved.

The following includes some ideas on how to achieve the most appropriate website design for your practice and how an effective website can help attract patients and retain existing ones.

### **Less is more**

In my experience, websites can often be more complicated than they need to be and come with expensive maintenance contracts that tie you in. Your main goal is to provide existing and prospective patients with as much helpful information about your practice as possible, so, it's worth setting your requirements out as written instructions for your chosen web-service provider.

I always recommend keeping it simple and user-friendly with easy navigation and appropriate imagery so that later modification can be carried out by the practice. Adding of key words and links to your website will also make it more likely to be picked up by search engines such as Google and work most effectively if they're used in your page headings and repeated through your page content.

I also strongly believe that it's worth factoring search engine optimisation (SEO) into your website budget. After all, it would be pointless to spend money on having a website designed only to have no way for potential patients to find it. Most website companies will offer SEO packages and it's worth analysing each to see if the opportunities offered suit your target audience. If utilised well, your website can be a powerful communication tool in an increasingly competitive arena, saving your patients time and building awareness of your practice, but please remember to always be cautious.

### **The law's the law**

The security of personal information is more important than ever in a paperless environment and this places a huge responsibility on you and your team to ensure that your practice is fully compliant with the law and, in particular, the Data Protection Act of 1998. The fact is, however, that it's the practice principal's responsibility to ensure that ethical advertising standards are met, both in the waiting room and on your website. Ignorance of the law in an electronic environment is not a defence and dental professionals must be seen to exercise proper restrictions and controls.

Complying with regulations when it comes to your website is certainly a key consideration, but the GDC 'Standards for Dental Professionals' should also be maintained. Some payment plan providers also offer a range of guidance and literature to help you make sense of the web and can offer you training and advise to ensure you get it right first time.

It's clear to me that having an effective website can not only show your practice in the best possible light, but can also lead to commercial gain by attracting new patients. In the current financial climate this is not something to be taken lightly and well worth the effort in the long run. How you go about setting up your website is completely up to you, but I hope that the ideas above have given you some help and inspiration for your future www.

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#### **About the author:**

Tracy Cluett-Green is one of Denplan's Key Client Consultants and has been with Denplan for more than four years. Her previous experience in business management and her detailed knowledge of marketing and website account-management has made her advice and guidance invaluable for dental teams in the South-East region.