

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTROL ELEMENTS IN DENTAL OFFICE MANAGEMENT**

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(Abstract): In the current economic situation statistical indicators suggest a decline in global and national dental services market under increased competition. Hence, a cost-effective and strengthening market position. Thus it is recommended the office management to focus on retention and follow active patients and to create a system of quality control maneuvers. In order to achieve these objectives we must monitor certain elements of medical control, economic, management and promotion. **Keywords:** MARKETING SERVICES, CONTROL ELEMENTS, DENTAL PRACTICE, MANAGEMENT

Dental services market evolution can be interpreted using data from private health insurance companies and national professional associations of dentists and the data provided by the companies producing equipment and dental materials (1, 3, 4).

The declared values of dental materials and equipment manufacturers worldwide and European related volumes sold in each category in the last two years suggest a decrease (3, 4). The only categories where positive developments are expressed are *Cad-Cam* technology for radiology equipment and implants, but national companies distributing equipment and dental materials suggest a decline in sales while suspending contracts with C.N.A.S..

All these suggests a decrease in the number of dental treatments at national level made in a dental market with a growing number of dentists and a decrease in addressability to dental care.

In the current market of oro-dental health services proper management may facilitate praxis to new purchases and performing dentist can support multiple roles of professional, manager and entrepreneur.

For the practitioner to effectively control cabinet work certain economic elements must be taken into account, medical, marketing and management. Thus the number of patients is important in the medical act for time allocation, the scheduling, the financial aspect of the revenue they bring human resources in terms of number and their training.

The elements of medical nature are represented by the volume of patients and the number of maneuvers performed, their addressability for certain types of treatment and the quality of care.

Service quality can be measured by the implementation of therapeutic protocols and laboratory checks: X-rays, documenta-

## The importance of control elements in dental office management

tion patterns, general photos and intraoral camera that can capture intermediate stages, all these also covering the legal aspect of the treatment. Systematizing therapeutic measures will lead to a better control of the quality and increase the success rate. It will also lead to an efficient and predictable use of the time allocated to a particular maneuver, the necessary material and human resources involved. It is therefore recommended the formation of a constant, empathic dentist - nurse team, thus eliminating the syncope in the operating time. It is also recommended that for special, complex cases, to discuss with colleagues from the clinic or other specialists. To perfect the medical act and prevent potential complications it is recommended a review of the patients for the next day. Most people, especially the working population, one that caters to premium service want a more accurate assessment of time spent in treatment in general, and the number of each meeting. To predict this, a very accurate diagnosis should be taken into account, along with its understanding by the patient, both medically and financially. Other items which affect treatment duration are the training of the physician, the medical team, the material equipment of the cabinet and the execution time for laboratory work. Thus the office should be represented by a team of professionals with a flexible work schedule, with an adequate radiology equipment (which saves the patient trip to the radiology lab) to work with a lab, with a reasonable time of performance, which will ensure prompt shipment and provide active assistance (staff offices delegate relationship with patients to determine the color of any adjustments).

Another way to check the quality of medical care is represented by patients'

opinions at the end of treatment. Their satisfaction is related to aesthetics, the time spent with them, the attention they enjoyed, all reported to the final estimate.

*Patient feed-back* related to the therapeutic act and the relationship with the doctor can be obtained using a questionnaire or in a phone conversation at the end of the treatment.

*Patient's questionnaire* should include questions about patient satisfaction, the presentation of therapeutic solution, and the relationship with the medical team. The answer may be free or quantitative, for example from 1 to 5 or from unsatisfactory to better than expected (5). There should be a section dedicated to suggestions for improving the services indicated in terms of networking, quality and types of treatment.

Patients need for certain services suggests the type of maneuvers that should be provided and hence *the tariffs* (5, 6, 7). Patients' expectations consequently dictate the level of equipment and materials supplied and also the HR element through training and number. *The qualitative* aspect is given by the professional education: specialist surgeon, orthodontist, endodontist, periodontist and *one quantitatively* reflected by the number of doctors, nurses, a receptionist, an accountant and maybe a manager. An increased quality can be achieved by continuous training of doctors and nurses and increasing communication skills within and between the medical team and the patient. This can be done by creating predictive systems, communication patterns, with answers and clear attitude that predict any case linked to the interaction of the patients, with the laboratory, suppliers. These skills can be provided in the job description and must be properly understood and acknowledged by all em-

ployees including participation in training sessions (communication and sales service) organized within the cabinet. Job descriptions should clearly state the professional obligations, continuous improvement skills, achieving periodical goals, including payment of wages, bonuses, professional advancement. Organizing regular meetings with team members will help achieve the objectives by taking certain correctional measures. Also, attention will be given to the relationship with the patients to remind them of periodic monitoring, and for any feedback.

Economic elements are represented by the value of revenue, expense, profit, cash flow. They need to be regularly assessed against monthly, quarterly, annually. Hence the recommendation to delegate tasks to specialized assistance of an accountant and manager.

Cash flow is the financial element that shows all aspects of financial activity is useful in assessing the economic performance of praxis, thus ensuring correct identification of the costs including those represented by insurance, rents, loans, rates, utilities, various contracts with certain companies (the maintenance of equipment, work safety, advertising, security) of various fees (telephone, internet, magazines, subscriptions), equipment amortization, the value of wages. Variable expenses can be represented by the stocking, bonuses, and possible unexpected expenses. To these are added investments in equipment and materials, improvement of human resources, the modernization of space, etc. in relation to inflation, changes in taxes applicable to company and employees and the purchasing power of patients.

Forecasting future investment in new technologies and the improvement of hu-

man resources is based on the addressability of patients for certain maneuvers. Acquisition of new technology can be represented by equipment, instruments, new materials, which involve improving human resources for their effective operation. These may include purchase of a radiological device, a dental microscope, a *Cad-Cam* system and an advanced system for composite materials. It can also be represented by the purchase of computer software, a camera with macro lens, to better capture the original situation, the end result, and the characteristics of the teeth and of course related software, which are intended to improve communication between practitioner and patient, between the cabinet and laboratory favoring the medical control.

Predictability of costs involved in performing maneuvers, of control over the time allotted, the addressability of patients determines the most accurate price for the treatment.

Office revenues are the revenues from patients, along with C.N.A.S. contracted amounts for physicians and laboratory examinations. A special category of income can come from contracts with private health insurance companies. A constant minimum flow of revenue can be assured by a predictable schedule of appointments, control and patient satisfaction.

Marketing elements have a role in promoting office services, both existing and new, in selling them and keeping contact with patients; advertizing can be done through the website, business cards, brochures, newsletters promotional campaigns, subscriptions.

Management involves the integration, synthesis, implementation and control of the elements mentioned above. It also in-

## The importance of control elements in dental office management

volves creating a business plan and implementing it. Business development will determine a delegation of a manager to closely monitor the business parameters. So, the doctor will be able focus on the role of professional and entrepreneur. This is because the national dental services market is still suffering from a lack of training and successful business models. This leads to hesitant evolving and expanding of offices and in purchasing new equipment and technologies.

The manager has to identify the elements that can measure clinical and financial development that, together with the patients determines the office politics.

A performance management involves implementing protocols, predictable system of networking and communication.

They must provide control elements, easy and accurate forecasting (8, 9). Planning and delegation processes involving office work should enable the physician to focus on the professional aspect.

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