





The time factor

Laura Horton asks you to find out about the role you can place into your practice to reduce your stress levels

The placement of the treatment co-ordinator role is spreading fast and not only in private practice. If you do not have a treatment co-ordinator (TCO) then you are probably suffering in more ways than you can currently imagine. I know your pain only too well and there are many reasons dentists are suffering. This article will discuss a few comments that I hear from dentists, whilst giving you something to think about and get your teeth into.

The time factor

The most common complaint that I hear from dentists is the lack of time. This is what I call 'the time factor'.

You do not have time to:

- Provide detailed initial examinations
- Build good quality relationships
- Offer free consultations.

Let's discuss each point further:

Most new patient examinations consist of just that – an examination. It is rare that these examinations create a huge amount of perceived value from your patient's perspective. There are no detailed discussions, no emotional understanding of your patient, and no assessing of their personality. The relationship building goes no further than small talk.

The time factor: there is not enough time – ok, there could be if you lengthened the appointment time, and therefore raised the fee of your examinations. But do you want to out price yourself? If patients are ringing around for fees, will they choose your practice?

Building the foundations

Building good quality relationships is a vital part of a successful business. Imagine if your TCO built an amazing relationship with the new patient and began to create a vision of you, the dentist, in the patients mind, resulting in a relationship being built with the patient for you – all before you had even met! Imagine if your TCO really understood your patients' needs and concerns on an emotional level, understood the way in which your patient wishes to be treated, gathered a detailed history of your patient – medically, dentally and socially. How would you feel if, on top of all of this, you knew what your patient's future goals and desires were, and you have not met the patient? Have you created the picture in your mind?

The time factor: ask yourself – how much time would this save you? Not to mention the great relationships that you would encounter.

Free consultations are a great way to get new patients into your practice. Do you offer this service? How much of your time are you prepared to give away for free? Most dentists may say 15 minutes. In practices, you find some dentists are happy to do this and others are not. This results in free consultations becoming a negative.

The time factor: if every dentist in your practice did agree to this, what would happen in these 15 minutes? Do you have a plan? Is 15 minutes really enough time?

The questions that I am asking you are the initial stages of the vision you can create of your TCO. I am trying to get you thinking, to open your mind to the endless possibilities that can be implemented with a TCO. What I am describing is just the beginning of your pain free life with a TCO.

The solution to all three points that have been discussed is to offer an appointment with a treatment co-ordinator – free of charge to the patient with no time scheduled in the dentist's diary.

The care factor

The care that your patient receives is another important factor many dentists wish to implement. The customer service that your patients receive is either not good enough or inconsistent. I do not doubt for one second that everybody in the team does their best but the problem is usually that everyone is pulling in different directions. The result? The patient has a bad experience – a negative one.

How would you feel if a TCO could be in control of your patients' experience in the practice – even guiding you in the direction that provides a positive outcome for your patient?

If you want to improve your patients' journey to ensure they are bowled over with the experience they receive in the practice then a TCO can be the driving force behind this. Why spend time sitting around waiting for the 'right team' and making further excuses? Take the lead and make the move.

Implementing the TCO role is the start on a new journey for your practice. The type of person that undertakes this role becomes a real team player. They put energy and effort into this role and will not let the patient's experience be a negative one.

I now want to take you further ahead down your patient's journey. How do you feel when you have completed a detailed treatment plan for your patient? In most situations completing a complex treatment plan is tiring. Dentists spend a vast amount of time planning the options on paper, and then even more time placing the treatment plans onto software. How much time is this taking? I know the answer and the pain – you are staying late or coming in early to complete this task! Before you are ready to present the case to your patient in person, or by post, you then have to prepare the medical legal side – are you providing the right amount of consent and estimate forms for your patients? My personal findings from dentists as to why this is not happening are:

- They are too busy
- The reception team forgot because they are too busy
- The correct consent forms are not available.

If you are medically-legally minded you would be shocked to learn how many practices have no consent forms for their patients. It's equally poor when patients are not provided with estimates – then there is a complaint or confusion over the fees – this becomes a daily ongoing de-motivating battle. The battle is between you, the patients and your front desk team.

The time factor: how would you feel if you planned all the options, as you always do, clinically then your TCO took over and did the rest? All you need to do is review and check all the documents are 100% prior to reviewing the options with your patient. Regulations will come in soon where you need to be on top of your game – the TCO role takes all the stress away.

Your life can be easier. Your patients at times suffer pain with their teeth, mouth or smile – you suffer with the pain of being a dentist and the need to provide a high level of care, quality treatment, a good service and, at the same time, ensure you are 100% protected legally.

The TCO role is a win-win-win situation. Win for the patients, the dentist and the team.

The time factor: you need this role now – it only takes two days to implement into your practice.

The TCO role is a driving force for change so put your practice into action mode, implement a TCO and see your practice grow in many ways, as well as waving goodbye to your pain. [PD](#)



Laura Horton will be speaking at Private Dentistry's annual seminar, Private Dentistry Live on Friday 23 October in London. For further information and to book please contact Independent Seminars on 0800 371652 or visit www.independentseminars.com.

Comments to pd@fmc.co.uk

Laura travels throughout the UK bringing her Treatment Co-ordinator programme direct to you. The training Laura Horton Consulting provides is bespoke to suit your practice's goals and vision. All training is in-house and CPD verifiable. For further information email laura@laurahortonconsulting.co.uk, visit www.laurahortonconsulting.co.uk or call 01279 755266.

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