

## Start Your Office Off Right in 2020— Promote the Practices That Promote Your Practice

by Terri Wilson

Two of the most important questions to ask when looking for ways to improve a business is “what is working,” and “what isn’t?” Finding the practices that play to your team’s strengths while keeping your clients happy and healthy can be a complicated balancing act, but choosing to promote those methods makes for a stronger, more productive team environment.

In this article, we will be considering a couple of outward-facing, patient relationship concerns that might be holding your dental practice back from better profitability. In the next issue of *The Bridge*, we will focus more on inward, team-facing topics that can improve your team dynamics.

When deciding how to manage your practice, consider that, if you permit it, you promote it. Dental professionals are “promoting” methods and prob-

lems inside of their dental practices by “permitting” those issues to take control instead of promoting positive behaviors that promote positive results.

**Permitting poor customer service.** Bad attitudes and habits of dental team members can affect the overall perspective of the patients along with other dental teammates (i.e. coming to work late or missing a lot of work, being unfriendly or not willing to help).

**Permitting poor communication.** All sorts of methods are available to communicate with patients and dental teams, including the technology that is part of most dental office software. Missing morning huddles or monthly team meetings also does not allow time to discuss internal policies and procedures.

**Permitting patients to be uneducated.** Dental benefits are not intended to dictate a patient’s treatment; they’re meant to make treatment more

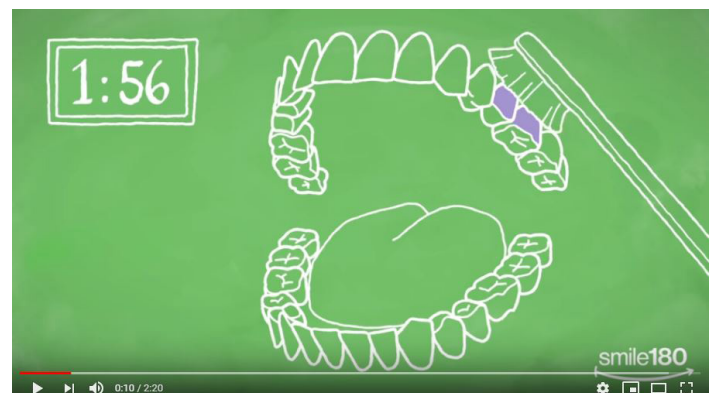
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## Plan Now for Children’s Dental Health Month

February is National Children’s Dental Health Month, and planning ahead will give you time to make the most of it for your patients.

Marshall Molar’s Kids Corner has lots of printables and fun facts for you to use. Visit our website at <https://tinyurl.com/tltyjsf> for information.

The toothbrush timer on Delta Dental of Tennessee’s YouTube Channel is also a good tool to recommend to your patients. It shows how long to brush each tooth so they will be sure to cover all the surfaces and brush for 2 minutes.





# ***Cyber Security for Dental Practices – Good Rules for Protecting Your Patients and Your Practice***

In recent months, there has been an influx of cyber security hacks in dental practices. Just recently, an event occurred where more than 100 dental practices were hacked through their IT service company. The security breach occurred through the use of their “remote administration services.” Sometimes the use of technology requires a few extra steps for security purposes that some people might consider inconvenient.

Individuals are affected by a PHI breach, the Secretary of HHS must be immediately notified.

In the State of Tennessee, the Board of Dentistry specifies the requirements for a dental practice in regard to the protection of PHI for patients under the Rules of Tennessee Board of Dentistry, sections 0460-01.12 (5), 0460-01.16 (2), 0460-01.16 (3). Ignorance is not bliss if your office falls victim to a cyber-attack.

Since technology has advanced so much in just the past few years, many offices have gone paperless and wireless. For dental offices that use technology like Amazon’s Alexa, Amazon announced last April that they had developed a program called “Alexa Skills Kit” that would enable “covered entities and their business associates” that are subject to Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) regulations. This kit would build Alexa’s skills to allow it to transmit and receive protected health information as a part of an “invite-only program.”

Dental practices are receiving many sales pitches from HIPAA security compliance consulting services stating the necessity of doing a thorough and accurate HIPAA Security Risk Analysis. This is a true statement and dental practices are also required to keep all of this information as part of their ongoing HIPAA security compliance program. Failure to do so could result in heavy fines. Be selective on the compliance consulting services you choose to go with. Ask around and

check credentials before choosing a compliance provider. The biggest warning is not to wait until you need a compliance consulting service.

Be proactive and not reactive. Invest in the proper protection of all computer systems and mobile devices. Don’t access unnecessary websites at the workplace with any device that is connected to the practice network. This is one area NOT to pinch pennies. Benjamin Franklin once said “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” Protect your practice—and your patients’ health information—in 2020!

“Convenience,” however, is not always the best option. Taking extra steps to protect information is a must in this day and time.

The Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health Act (HITECH Act) requires covered entities to notify patients, the Secretary of the Federal Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and possibly the media of any breach of unsecured protected health information (PHI). This can get quite expensive. Ransom fees are often associated with these hacks. When an attack occurs, the covered entity has up to 60 days from the time the breach has been discovered to notify all affected individuals. If 500 or more



affordable after the dentist and patient have decided together what's best for the patient's health and well-being.

The question then becomes, how can you promote the practices that will be the most beneficial for both the patient and the practice?

**Promote great customer service and communication** by establishing consistent communication with patients and amongst dental team members. There are many types of technology designed to aid in these areas. Using technology can give you the opportunity to create and send out newsletters to everyone keeping your patients up to date on the latest and greatest news regarding dentistry and how dentistry affects a patient's overall health, and the same is true of social media. Getting the dental team involved with the process helps the practice as a whole to be on the "same page" with updates and necessary changes. Have a staff member or two take responsibility for your social media presence so that you're connecting with your patients more often than a couple times per year.

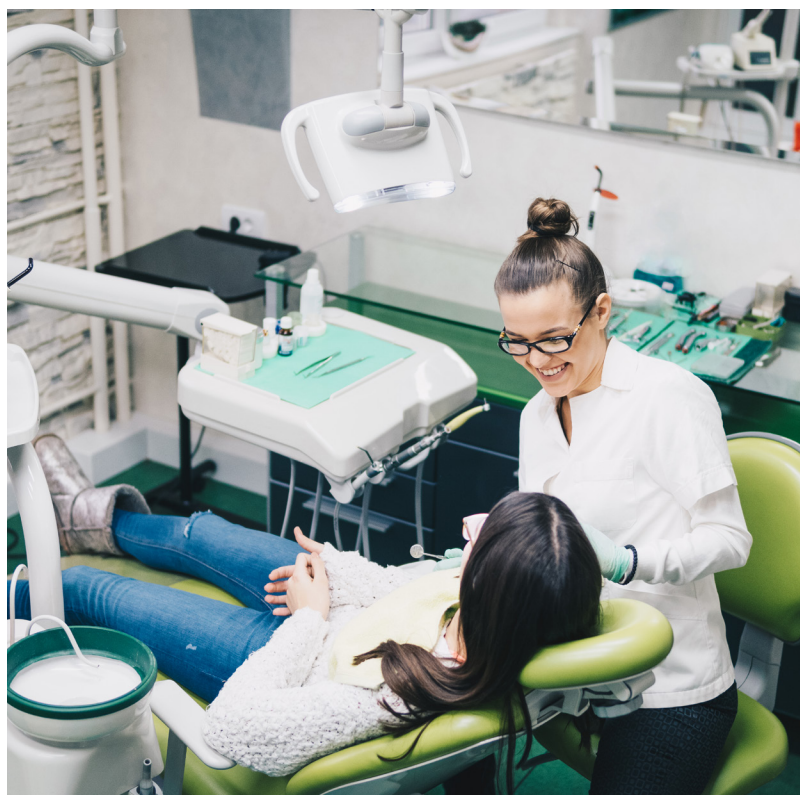
**Promote good education for your patients.** Treatment plan acceptance increases tremendously when you and your staff spend time educating your patients about dentistry and how it affects the patient's overall health. The waiting room area is the most underutilized place in the whole dental practice, and a great place to start their education.

Unfortunately, a lot of patients think "dentistry" is a commodity—not a necessity. Patients need to be educated on the fact that their dental insurance is not designed to cover their dental expenses at 100 percent. It is designed to be a benefit to help offset the cost of dental care. Practices are losing profits because their patients need help understanding the true value of the services provided. Patients may not have their priorities focused on what might be best for them. They want what they want and what they see value in. Do you realize that the fingernail and tattoo industry are multi-million dollar industries in this country alone and not one insurance claim is filed on either service?

Dental professionals have to put the value in dentistry by educating and promoting good dental health. Promote dentistry in your waiting room by giving patients

materials to read regarding dental care or provide a video showing how issues inside the mouth can cause future life or death situations. Signs of cancer, strokes, heart attacks, Alzheimer's, pre-term births or deaths of infants because of gum disease in mothers and so much more are diagnosed through dental screenings.

Train your dental team to give examples to patients of all possible outcomes that could occur if the patient



does not take care of their health. If a patient refuses x-rays, give the patient the example that the next time their car breaks down, take the broken car to a mechanic and tell that mechanic they can't open the hood to see what is going on. That is what a patient is telling a dentist when they refuse x-rays. They are expecting the dentist to fix all their dental problems without seeing what is going on internally.

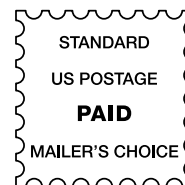
You and your staff know your patients. It's the job of the dental office to promote what works best for everyone, both patients and practice.

*The Delta Dental of Tennessee Dental Office Handbook and PPO fee schedules are available on our website at [www.deltadentaltn.com](http://www.deltadentaltn.com)*





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## Have you met DDTN's newest Professional Relations team member?



**W**e are thrilled to welcome Terri Wilson to our team as our new Professional Relations Network Representative. Terri is one of the most unassuming people you will ever meet, yet she is one of the sharpest dental professionals with a string of certifications, including RDA, CDA, CD-PMA, FADAA, and CDP.

A prolific writer and popular presenter on practice development and management, Terri brings a wealth of industry experience and knowledge.

She is available to speak for study groups and other professional gatherings and will continue presenting CE courses around Tennessee.

Do you have practice questions DDTN can help with or ideas for topics you'd like to learn more about? Send them to our professional relations team at [ProfessionalRelations1@DeltaDentalTN.com](mailto:ProfessionalRelations1@DeltaDentalTN.com).

### Upcoming Speaking Dates for Terri Wilson

**January 31, 2020, Nashville:** "Taking the Mystery Out of Dental Insurance in 2020," presented by Nashville Dental at the Interfaith Dental Clinic. Call 1-800-251-2196 to register or visit <https://nashvilledental.com/events/takingthemysteryout/> for information.

**February 13, 2020, Memphis:** "Roadmap to a Profitable Dental Practice," presented by Delta Dental of Tennessee, Pink Palace Museum. Visit our website at [www.deltadentaltn.com](http://www.deltadentaltn.com) to register or for more information.

**March 19-21, 2020, Atlanta:** Come see us at the Hinman Dental Meeting, booth #1822. For information, visit [hinman.org](http://hinman.org).

**April 17, 2020, Nashville:** "Bare Necessities of a Profitable Dental Practice: Solutions Instead of Excuses," Tennessee Dental Hygiene Association annual meeting at The Inn at Opryland. Visit <http://tenndha.com/2020-tennessee-dental-hygienists-annual-session/> for information.