



The value of a treatment co-ordinator

Having discussed incorporating a treatment co-ordinator in the last issue, **Laura Horton** now explains how they can reduce non-clinical stress and improve team morale

Last issue I discussed the journey of the new patient consultation with your treatment co-ordinator (TCO). The TCO completed the initial 'interview' for you and introduced the new patient to yourself and gave you vital information on the patient's emotional concerns about their teeth, mouth and smile, and therefore their desired end goal.

So how does the TCO continue with their role in your practice after your

new patient assessment?

After the assessment it is important that you and your TCO take time out of your diary, maybe around 15 minutes, to discuss the treatment plan together while you, the dentist, can assess all of the data that you have collected.

Your TCO will then create the treatment plan(s) on the computer for you, ensuring they are accurate. They will then collate all the consents and

information sheets that you need for this case. You must always double check all the data is correct and place it into the patient's file ready for the case presentation appointment.

I would always recommend that you schedule the actual appointment for case presentation in between two working days and no further than one week after your assessment. This appointment, of course, would have been scheduled by your TCO.

So your new patient has arrived and you and your TCO go with them back into the consultation room. The consents and estimates are out; any visual aids that you require are out ready and all the digital photos that you have taken are on the computer in a certain order. You can now present the case.

Your TCO is there as a neutral person, sitting in the middle of yourself and the new patient. You can present the case on a clinical and emotional level. Once you have finished presenting the case, you can leave the room and the TCO will ensure that the patient fully understands everything that has been explained. If the patient wishes to go ahead with the options given, then the TCO will go through all the consents and estimates, ensuring that they are signed correctly. Just imagine right now if you did not have a TCO you would be spending another half an hour doing this! If the patient has further questions about the treatment plans proposed it is another opportunity for TCO to listen to the patient and re-explain all the options on an emotional level to suit the patients end goals if needed.

Remember that this appointment is the 'close' of the treatment presentation and this is where you get your go ahead to begin the patient's treatment. If the patient is not fully responsible for the investment – i.e. someone else is paying for them – ensure that person is there on the day too.

The TCO will then book the patient in and collect the money as per your practice policy. Your patient may require a finance plan to pay for their treatment; again this is something your TCO can do. They can ensure the form is completed correctly and process the application for you – at no additional cost to the practice!

When the appointments are being scheduled for a smile design, the TCO can ensure that all the 'spa' facilities that you offer are going to be ready i.e. if your patient wants to watch a DVD, the TCO can ensure that the DVD of your patient's choice is noted for that exact appointment and, therefore, your nurse has it all on ready to watch when the patient enters the room.

Increasing practice productivity

So to recap, your TCO is a concierge role, taking 90% of your non-clinical dentistry off you, the dentist. This will increase practice productivity and morale in your practice, as well as insuring that your private practice offers outstanding customer service.

A treatment co-ordinator is a team member with many different skills that will benefit all involved, including the patients.

They need to have the majority of the following skills/assets:

- People person
- Positive attitude
- Leadership qualities
- Self motivation (for self improvement)
- Excellent listening skills
- Team player
- Excellent communication skills (20% verbal and 80% non-verbal).

I have one very important piece of advice for all dentists wishing to place this role into their private practice and that is the dentist and the treatment co-ordinator must have a good relationship between themselves. They will need to be able to give each other constructive criticism as they venture down this route, to ensure that the patient has the best possible experience in their practice throughout the journey, from new patient to becoming a referring patient of the practice.

To summarise, the creating of a treatment co-ordinator in your practice with result in reduced non-clinical stress for dentists and improved morale for the team.

I recommend every practice with private patients has a TCO. **PD**

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Laura is a qualified DSA, dental radiographer and oral health educator. She has extensive management experience in dentistry and now has her own company, Laura Horton Consulting.

Laura has developed courses that look at systems, customer care and verbal skills. She also teaches photography to AACD standard.

Through her company, Laura Horton Consulting Ltd, Laura can help you and your team in many areas of practice improvement. From impacting two-day in-house training events for the whole practice to transformational coaching programmes. For further information, please email laura@laurahortonconsulting.co.uk or telephone Laura direct on 07912 360779. Her website is www.laurahortonconsulting.co.uk.

In brief: incorporating a treatment co-ordinator

1. Key skills

A TCO needs to have many different skills, including:

- A positive attitude
- Good leadership qualities
- Being a team player
- Excellent listening and communication skills
- Being self motivated
- Being a people person

2. Outcomes

- The TCO can reduce the stress of the dentist by taking 90% of non-clinical dentistry off them
- The TCO role can provide a concierge service; building a relationship between the practice and the patient
- A TCO can improve team morale and increase practice productivity
- The TCO acts as a neutral person and so can take the patient on an emotional (rather than factual) journey
- The TCO role can ensure that the practice offers outstanding customer service