

Podcast 4.9.18

1. The three little words **floss or die** carry many assumptions with them. These words assume that flossing really means overall home-care efforts. They also assume that those efforts—when practiced optimally—reduce the population of oral bacteria, which implies that pathogenic bacterial reduction is important for survival. This further implies that the bacteria themselves and the periodontitis they cause are involved at some level with cardiovascular health and other life-threateners. **What do we really know at this point?**

A. We know pretty well how periodontal disease happens. In a nutshell, destruction of gum tissue is initiated by bacterial lipopolysaccharides (LPS), but is kept going by the body. Periodontal pathogens produce enzymes that break down collagen in the extracellular matrix and the gingival cell membranes, which they eat. The body responds with an immune-inflammatory response, including the release of enzymes and inflammatory mediators. The host enzymes break up collagen and periodontal tissue, creating pathways for white blood cells to access, engage, and stop the bacteria in their tracks.

B. **What we don't know**—At this point, however, we do not know the exact mechanism whereby all of this may contribute to the demise of an individual. There are a number of biologically plausible mechanisms that are being investigated. At some point, there will likely be a number of them, as is the case with many diseases and conditions that have multifactorial causes.

C. **Something to think about**—We do know that optimal home care reduces the oral bacterial population. We know that bacteria are the villains in the gum disease story. No one will argue that bacterial reduction does not create a healthy environment. **Floss or die** is an exaggeration at this point, but there was a time when *stop smoking or die* was also an exaggeration.

2. **6 ways your dental practice website falls short** - About 97% of people get online to find local businesses such as dental practices, according to local search engine optimization (SEO) company [BrightLocal](#). This means dentists like you need [a website](#) that attracts prospective patients and convinces them that your practice is right for their needs. **Here are a few ways your website could be hurting your ability to attract new patients.**

A. It has a clunky, outdated design

An effective website has streamlined pages that share essential information about your practice and its services without drowning visitors in huge chunks of text. Invest in a clean, modern website with an appealing color scheme, highly visible contact information, and a few professional photos.

B. It is not responsive

According to [Google](#), more than half of searches in the US take place on mobile devices. As a result, the search engine favors [responsive websites](#). The reason is simple: mobile visitors are frustrated by websites that don't look right on their devices. If you're not sure whether your website is responsive, pull it up on your smartphone. If it is responsive, it will appear to "fit" your screen—no photos or text will be cut off, and you won't have to scroll and pinch awkwardly to read text or click the navigation.

C. It lacks your biography

Prospective patients want to know your qualifications before booking appointments. Your website should include a brief biography that discusses your education, training, certifications, and awards. It should be accompanied by at least one or two professional photos. Your website should also include information that makes your dental practice stand out. For example, if [your waiting room is well-designed, functional, and full of amenities](#) such as a mini fridge with complimentary beverages, include that information on your website.

D. It does not have helpful service pages

If your website merely lists the services you offer, you're missing out in more ways than one. First, detailed information about services educates prospective patients and answers common questions. This helps people determine if a service is right for them and saves you from answering related questions when

patients visit with you in the office. Second, individual service pages can greatly improve where your website appears on search engine results pages. By giving rich, detailed information about each service on its own page, you increase the chances that search engines will find it useful for local searches.

E. It does not feature patient reviews

A whopping 85% of consumers trust online reviews as much as personal recommendations from friends or family, according to BrightLocal. If you're not featuring positive patient reviews on your website, then you might be missing out on new business. You can repost reviews from websites like Healthgrades, or you can solicit reviews from patients. Also according to BrightLocal, 68% of consumers will leave a review when asked.

F. It does not offer online booking

According to [PatientPop](#), about 42% of patients would rather make appointments on a website or mobile app than over the phone. Dental practices that do not offer online booking could be missing out on these prospective patients. Another important reason to offer online booking: 24/7 conversion. PatientPop research indicates that 63% of online bookings stem from new patients, and nearly one-third of appointments booked online are booked after hours when your front office staff are not available to answer the phone.

Improve your website, improve your practice

3. Social media practices for dental offices - There's more to running a great social media campaign than just making sure your office has an account on every platform. When it comes to smart, and potentially free, online marketing, how you handle your accounts on twitter, [Facebook](#), Snapchat, [Instagram](#), and [Pinterest](#) will separate your practice from the rest, especially when you want to attract young professionals and families.

A. Respond to messages throughout the day

Current and prospective patients are likely to use social media messaging to contact your office, especially if it's outside of business hours. Although email may be an option, most people don't expect an email reply very quickly, but they do expect a quick reply with social media direct messaging. The sooner you respond to private messages or posts on your wall, the better. Not only does this show you're concerned about the person who contacted you, but it's a reflection of the attention you put toward the practice as a whole.

Although dental practices are busy, it's important to check messages at least a few times a day. If possible, have an alert set up that tells you as soon as a message comes through so that you can read it and respond immediately. Want to take things up a notch? Get back with the sender even if it's in the evening or on a weekend. Like it or not, we live in a 24/7/365 society, and things don't appear to be changing anytime soon.

B. Update your page regularly

A social media page is only useful if you use and update it routinely. Otherwise, it can slip through the cracks or even get archived. Some ideas to get you started on posts for the practice include:

- Information on continuing education that the office is participating in
- Photos of staff members on their birthdays
- Patient of the month (with photo consent, of course!)
- Oral hygiene tips and tricks
- Videos of the dentist explaining how a new piece of technology works

Get the staff together to brainstorm, then create an editorial calendar to map out your posts and when they'll go live. Keep your post ideas unique. Also, a calendar will help you make sure that your social media accounts don't become stagnant.

Social media management platforms such as Hootsuite recommend specific times and days of the week to share posts, depending on the site you're using. Sites like Twitter recommend posting about 3:00 in the afternoon. Facebook is best between noon and 3:00 p.m. on Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays, and between noon and 1:00 p.m. on the weekends. Instagram usually gets the most hits during lunch hours, Monday through Friday.

Posting at peak times is the best way to make sure your updates or photos are seen by more people. This doesn't necessarily mean you have to be online at these times, but you can use a platform such as Hootsuite to plan and schedule posts.

C. Appoint social media role to specific team member

Unless you have a specific person who's in charge of social media, your online presence is likely to be inconsistent and may gradually fizzle out. This can cause your online profiles to become outdated. With one, or perhaps two people in charge of managing the practice's social media accounts, there's more accountability and ownership for making this outlet successful.

Unfortunately, not just any team member can take on all of the social media management. You need to select someone who: can use proper grammar and spelling while creating posts or responding to comments; knows how to tactfully respond to messages or public posts on the page because this reflects the demeanor of the office; can regularly monitor the pages and messages to ensure that potential networking isn't overlooked; is capable of curating unique content and finding duty-free images to accompany each post.

D. Encourage patients to tag and check in during their visits

Depending on state board regulations and where your practice is located, offer appropriate incentives to encourage patients to check in or tag your office in photos. Incentives can be something such as placing names in a monthly drawing for a whitening kit or free movie tickets. When they do, their friends will see your practice name and build familiarity with your brand. It's free advertising, and nothing is better than patients who are referred by their friends.

Today's patients often turn to social media before a phone directory or even a website to look up contact information. Ensuring that all of your information is accurate and up-to-date is something that no dental business can afford to miss out on. If this means making a modest investment in a company that can do it for you, consider it money well spent.

4. Have you been the target of a dental insurance audit? Dental insurance companies typically pay for the usual preventive services and even some basic services without hesitating. But when it comes to major services and large payout amounts, some insurance companies ask for treatment notes and other supporting documentation. This triggers what most people describe as an insurance audit.

What if the insurance company asks for consent forms, the doctor's treatment notes, medical histories, patient payments ledgers, or lab slips? Should you comply? Of course you should, because you have nothing to hide.

A. Is there a way to make the audit process go more smoothly?

Sending the insurance company a narrative in advance can help minimize the chances of becoming the target of an audit. But sometimes, if a single claim payout is in excess of a certain dollar amount, it automatically triggers an audit. This leaves you with nothing but a delayed claim and having to take time out of your busy day to put together a whole presentation for a single patient claim, which can take minutes or hours.

B. What can you send prior to being the target of an insurance audit?

1. If you can't read your doctor's handwriting, you can be sure the insurance company reps won't be able to either. This is why the doctor should dictate the narrative as you type the information on letterhead. Be sure to explain what was done (although it's already on the claim form), and most importantly, why it was done. Be sure to emphasize the "need" for treatment.

2. If the treatment was for cosmetic purposes, you can forget about getting paid. Be sure to focus on explaining why the treatment was necessary from a medical or dental standpoint. Explain the functional reasons using terminology the insurance company reps can understand. Be sure to point out what the desired prognosis is, and any complications the patient may have endured had the person not undergone such treatment.

3. If the treatment is not 100% visible on x-rays, you need to make sure your periodontal charting explains it. Be sure to indicate if the patient is suffering from recession, loss of attachment, bleeding on probing, pocket depths, bone loss, and other factors that could support the need for the treatment.

Following these steps can reduce the amount of claims you get back requiring more information

5. FTC Sues Three Dental Suppliers for Conspiracy-The US Federal Trade Commission (FTC) filed a complaint against the nation's three largest dental suppliers—Benco, Henry Schein, and Patterson—on February 12. The FTC alleges that these companies violated US antitrust laws by refusing to provide discounts to buying groups represented by individual dentists. These three companies control 85% of dental product sales and services nationally. The dental practices that ideally might have benefited comprised solo and small group practices. The complaint alleges the “big three” entered into an agreement refusing to provide discounts to buying groups representing smaller dental practices. Additionally, the complaint alleges a further violation by Benco in its attempt to enjoin Burkhart Dental Supply, the nation's fourth largest dental supplier, into the conspiracy. This separate “invitation to collude” represents an added complaint against Benco. The FTC contends that Benco, Henry Schein, and Patterson unreasonably restrained price competition, distorted prices, and undermined the ability of independent dentists to obtain lower prices and discounts for dental supplies. The competitive bidding process was allegedly eliminated or reduced for these buying groups. The administrative trial is scheduled to begin on October 16, 2018.

6. Hu-Friedy launches AdvantaClear surface disinfectant product line - Available as wipes, liquid, or spray, AdvantaClear features a one-minute kill time for 30 of the most common pathogens, including HIV-1, HBV, HCV, MRSA, influenza A virus (H1N1), *Salmonella enterica*, extended-spectrum b-lactamase (ESBL)-producing *E. coli*, and other pathogens with a two-minute kill time for tuberculosis (TB). AdvantaClear expands Hu-Friedy's reach as a primary source of [infection control](#) products, which covers instrument processing, cleaning and sterilization monitoring, waterline cleaning, hand care, and now surface disinfection. AdvantaClear is a convenient, ready-to-use intermediate-level disinfectant designed to clean and disinfect surfaces with a low-alcohol formula that will not affix blood or debris to surfaces. Its fragrance-free formula helps eliminate odor-causing bacteria with no harsh fragrance, making it less irritating to clinicians and patients alike. AdvantaClear is designed to be compatible with a wide range of surfaces, such as acrylic, aluminum, brass, copper, stainless steel, chrome, plastics, and more. Surface disinfection plays a major role in infection prevention, which is why we felt strongly about developing the best product for the job. With one-minute kill times across a broad range of pathogens and superior surface compatibility, clinicians can feel confident that the surfaces in their operatory will be disinfected quickly and effectively. AdvantaClear surface disinfectant is available as a spray, a ready-to-use liquid, or wipes (individually wrapped or in a 160-count canister). AdvantaClear products are available for sale in the United States from authorized Hu-Friedy representatives or dental distributors.
