

PEER-TO-PEER ARTICLES
WRITTEN BY YOU
OUR MEMBERS!

MEMBER
FEATURES



MEET THE MEMBER

Sharon Garner has been a Practice Administrator since 2011, and joined AADOM in 2016. She has a Bachelor's Degree in Business Management. She was inducted as a Fellow of AADOM in 2017, and was nominated for Practice Administrator of the Year three times. Twice she was awarded Dental Practice Administrator of the Year. She is currently pursuing induction as Master of AADOM, with plans to ultimately be inducted as a Diplomat of AADOM. Sharon lives in Maryland with her husband, Jeff, and has three sons and three wonderful grandchildren. Sharon is an avid lifelong learner, enjoys taking every dental management course she can find and loves sharing her knowledge with her amazing dental team members.

WHY DENTISTRY SHOULD CONSIDER EMBRACING

THE TECHNOLOGY OF CELL PHONES & SMART WATCHES

MEMBER ARTICLE | BY SHARON J. GARNER, MAADOM

Many Practice Administrators find themselves regularly challenged with trying to enforce a “No Cell Phone” policy. How often do you find yourself “reminding” staff to put their cell phones away during the day, “catching” team members quickly hiding their phone when they spot you walking around, or worse – blatantly staring at their cell phone while a patient waits to be acknowledged? The smart watch adds a whole new level to constant communication. Team members can keep their phone in the breakroom according to policy, with text, e-mail and phone call alerts popping up right on their wrist. What about that employee who spends so much time in the restroom, you KNOW they're checking messages! Discussions about the effect of cell phones and smart watches on efficiency and productivity are ongoing in many dental offices. In addition, there is a lot of concern about the legality of enforcing such a gray-area policy.

Our practice had an existing “No Cell Phone” policy in our employee

manual. We also have a doctor who pulls his cell phone out to show pictures and videos to patients. In addition, the doctor, our vice president, and various office repairmen/vendors often text or call me directly on my cell phone throughout the day. What a mixed message! As I was charging to the server room with cell phone to my ear to fix a problem, team members were ducking to hide their cell phone.

Like me, our team members are all wives, mothers, caretakers of elderly parents, and coordinators of all things family. In order for us to focus on the very important job of taking care of our very important patients, we felt the ability to balance work life with family responsibilities was crucial to a happy team, and ultimately our practice's success.

EMBRACING CONTINUED | PAGE 56

...EMBRACING CONTINUED

Furthermore, enforcing a “No Cell Phone” policy didn’t stop people from using their phones; it simply made them more creative - and even sneaky, which is not a good fit for team morale or our office culture. We acknowledge that the technology is here, and will be used one way or another.

Our practice’s approach to cell phone use has evolved over the years. Clinical staff members have their smart watches on (covered by disposable lab coat cuffs and gloves) and their cell phones in their scrub pocket (also under their disposable lab coat) on mute/vibrate. They may not take them out in the clinical areas due to germs/contamination, and never in the presence of a patient. One of our monthly OSHA-required safety talks focused on this subject. Scientists at the University of Arizona found that cell phones carry 10 times more bacteria than most toilet seats! Ugh, can you imagine putting a toilet seat up to your ear multiple times a day?

If one of our team members receives an important alert, they may quickly step to the breakroom to check their phone between patients. Smart watches allow them to see the incoming communication without having to step away to check their phone frequently. Front desk staff keep cell phones in their top desk drawer, always out of the patients’ view. If a team member’s cell phone vibrates, they quickly and discreetly glance at it to see who/what it is, but they do not pick it up unless it’s an emergency - in which case they say something and go to the breakroom.

If a team member receives an important communication to which they can’t respond right away, their family members know they can call the front desk. We will gladly pull a team member for an emergency, or take a message for a non-emergency. Our team covers for each other, swapping out during an emergency. Yes, we ask the caller if it’s an emergency that needs the person to be pulled from their procedure. Only once has the answer been yes, and it was a true emergency with an elderly parent.

Instead of crushing the technology, we’ve embraced it. Our practice is even finding ways to benefit from it. Team members agree that if they see a “social media”

moment (within HIPAA rules, of course) they take a picture or a video and send it to me to be posted. Our doctor has even begun “interviewing” happy patients on video. If a patient raves about their experience, the team member asks if they’d be willing to repeat it for a testimonial video, right then and there while they’re feeling so appreciative. A release form is included in our new patient welcome forms, as well as our annual update forms. If a patient declines to sign the release, a pop-up is placed on their electronic chart so we know not to ask for a picture or video. Our doctor recently agreed to implement an incentive/bonus program where team members earn \$5 per video testimonial submitted. More video testimonials help boost our Google ranking.

With this new perspective, our team says they’re happier and more content knowing they can be reached by their spouse or children’s school, and they don’t abuse it. They brag about it to their friends, who also want to work here. I was told during a recent interview that one of the reasons the person applied was our family-friendly culture. Her former office had a strict “No Cell Phone” policy which required her to leave her phone in her car. She has turned out to be an amazing addition to our team and appreciates being here.

Today, we have literally no cell phone or smart watch issues in the practice. It is important to note that this approach works best with a highly functional team who self-monitors.

Recently some interoffice communication programs, including Simplifeye, Yapi and OperaDDS have begun using smart watch technology for interoffice communication. The applications permit the hygienist to discreetly let the doctor know when a patient is ready for an examination, or the dental assistant to give a quick heads up to the treatment coordinator.

The value of an appreciative and productive team, as well as the ever-increasing number of applications being developed to increase efficiency and production utilizing smart watches, may encourage your office to consider the benefits of embracing today’s everyday technology. ■