

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

MEMBER FEATURES



MEET THE MEMBER

Carly Rhea, FAADOM is Office Manager at Devine Dentistry, a multi-doctor practice in Nashville. With nearly two decades of experience in the industry, Carly enjoys ongoing training through institutes such as LVI, Franklin Covey, and the Dawson Dental Academy. She is currently Vice President of her local AADOM chapter.

MEMBERSHIP

plans

MEMBER ARTICLE
| BY CARLY RHEA, FAADOM

It's no secret that dental care is an investment, and one that is well worth it. But, that doesn't make affording it any easier for a lot of patients. In today's world, household budgets have shrunk, although patients are continually in need of care. Where does that leave individuals who cannot afford dental insurance or do not have it available to them? Where does that leave dental practices, fighting against insurance companies to negotiate better rates? This dilemma is undoubtedly two-fold. What's the answer?

Serving our patients is a top priority for my team, which is why we put our heads together to find the best options for our patients so that they can afford the dental care that they need while maintaining their oral health. I'm excited to share that a recent change we implemented has not only helped our patients, but also improved our own processes, reporting system, and increased revenue.

IMPLEMENTING A DENTAL MEMBERSHIP PLAN

After years of hearing about them and talking with other office managers through AADOM, we decided it was time to take the leap to implement a dental membership plan. Starting out, we quickly learned that there were a lot of options, and it was imperative that we chose one to best suit the needs of both our patients and practice.

With much consideration, we chose

the plan, completed the demos, and decided on a system that I had heard mentioned multiple times before (on a dental podcast). The company was offering a promotion for \$50 off the monthly fee. The savings didn't stop there! After 400 members sign up, the monthly fee is waived (even if your membership numbers drop after that). That's a savings that you just can't beat!

WHY WE TOOK THE LEAP

One reason we decided to finally jump in is that we had many patients asking if we offered a payment or membership plan that wasn't "insurance". Times are changing, and we wanted to be a dental practice that thrives while exceeding the dental needs of our community. We've learned from our patients that what they need is an affordable way to maintain their oral health. It's not always as easy as advising someone to save a little money each month to cover their six-month cleaning and checkups, especially patients on a budget or with a family. We didn't want to be the type of practice that lost patients because they went someplace that offered a payment plan, or watch them stop coming in for preventive care

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(knowing that would cost them much more in the long run).

Enter a dental membership plan. The patients we market to are close to retirement, on Medicare/Medicaid without dental benefits, or younger community members who work for small businesses that lack dental insurance benefits. We also reach out to small businesses in our community to share how this benefit could help their employees. This provides a significant opportunity for us to welcome new patients, form relationships within our community, and foster awareness that maintaining oral health is essential to overall wellbeing.

MAKING THE DECISION

We sat down with the doctors to figure out what we wanted our plans to look like. The dental membership company that we chose has a fantastic support team and provided all necessary marketing material (digital and social media) that we can use to get the word out.

After setting up a few plans, we realized that our initial setup and practice management software wasn't the best. When you're working on the front lines day in and day out, it can be hard to notice what needs changing, let alone make time to even discover those opportunities.

After much thought, we were able to work the membership plan into our software. We did this by using specific codes and separate payment and adjustment types. This way, we can run reports to show active plans, which allows us to ensure all of our doctors are compensated for the procedures they perform on patients with membership plans. We can generate these reports once or month or at any time we see fit.

BENEFITS BEYOND MEASURE

The plan website that we use is straightforward and simple. Its set-up allows us to track which employee creates the plan. This was an important feature for us because our practice strives to recognize team efforts. Reports will show how many plans each team member sets up per month. Getting patients on board with a dental membership plan takes a team approach. It isn't the sole responsibility of the office

manager, front desk employees, or even the doctors. We made sure that our entire team understood how the plan works, and provided important talking points to share with patients.

We also utilize an in-house plan to encourage patients to remove dental insurance coverage and join a membership plan instead. Patients using out-of-network carriers pay a lot out-of-pocket, and we receive reduced fees for their services. Switching to the membership plan provides benefit to both the patient and to us. We could eventually become a fee-for-service membership practice. If you are a dental practice manager or handle insurance claims, you already know how frustrating insurance companies can be. You may have thought that becoming a fee-for-service practice wasn't possible, but I am here to tell you that it is, although it may take some time to adjust and make the changes.

GETTING STARTED - WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU?

If you've never considered implementing a dental membership plan at your practice, I encourage you to develop an action plan. Maybe you've thought about it but have been too busy to research or aren't sure where to start. Set aside some time each day to do your homework, outline practice goals, and find a dental membership plan that is best for your situation. I know you're busy, but commit to spending just 20 minutes a day to conduct your research. Some well-known membership plans are Boomcloud, Kleer*, Quality Dental Plan, and DentalHQ. Collect supporting evidence on how implementing a dental membership plan could improve your practice. It's essential to get your doctors on board, so be prepared to gather their input. Once they see the value, if they haven't already, you can move forward and narrow down your search for the best plan.

Not sure where to start? Maximize your AADOM membership by connecting with other dental practice managers to find out what they are using, ask questions, and start digging in. Don't be afraid of failing. Just take the first step, because the benefits are endless—for both your practice and your patients. ■

**Note: Kleer is the Official Dental Membership Plan of AADOM.*