

# THE DENTAL WAVE EFFECT

*Managing a surge of backlogged patient appointments in a post-pandemic world.*

MEMBER ARTICLE | BY CLAUDIA LASMITH, DAADOM

The dental field is one of resilience. Most recently, we created a structure during a time none of us had experienced before. For those of us who are planners, it was hard to look too far ahead because we were having to focus on what was right in front of us: a pandemic.

During this period, something happened that I called a “dental wave”. We were all so focused on the pandemic while our patients wanted to play it low-key. Some waited over a year for cleanings and cancelled every appointment, even when a well-trained dental veteran would try to keep them on the schedule.

At the time, we moved on as we do. But the result of our patients’ choices created a building wave. I looked at my dentist and said, “this is coming back for us”. I knew that all of those cancellations, whether for cleanings or treatment, would catch up eventually. Although people thought they could take a break from dental care, they

couldn’t take it forever. Dental care is healthcare. Now, that more vaccinated patients and others are becoming comfortable with the “new normal”, we’re having an influx of appointments on the schedule.

Here are a couple of tips that will help you prepare for this “dental wave” as you ride it through the months ahead:

Create additional blocks for emergencies on the doctor’s schedule. We have had more people grinding, chipping, and breaking teeth due to stress (compounded with the fact that they’ve delayed their dental appointment for over a year.) That one small filling they needed has become bigger, and in some cases, they now need a crown.

Due to the stress and unusual nature of just trying to get by, more of us are taking it out on our teeth.

**MEMBER  
FEATURE**  
PEER-TO-PEER ARTICLE

Have a plan for tackling past-due dental cleanings. The patients call in because their gums are bothering them. It’s not an abscess but they’re way past due for a cleaning. With a plan, you can manage this wave too. Block your schedule for overdue cleanings just like you do for new patient appointments.

If you had seven to ten emergency slots already built into your week, add a couple more. You also need to block extra spots for the patients that have waited over a year for a cleaning.

DENTAL WAVE CONTINUED | PAGE 33



## MEET THE MEMBER

Jennifer Steadman, BSDH, RDH, DAADOM, specializes in business operations, recruitment/ interview strategies, team development, and communication. Her career has evolved from dental assisting to hygienist, practice manager and now her current role as Director of Operations. In 2020 she was named AADOM's Practice Administrator of the year. Her goal is to empower dental professionals to hone in on their strengths and become a positive light in the dental community.

### ...TECHNOLOGY CONTINUED

The software can identify who has the highest case plan acceptance rate amongst your hygiene team when your doctors present treatment. If one of your hygienists is doing well in this area, determine what they are doing so they can help train the team.

Patient communication systems are a must, especially in today's world. All patient communication systems are helpful, but they are not all created the same. Do your research and ask questions to determine what will work best for you and your practice. Does it integrate seamlessly with your practice management system? Is it easy for the team and patients to use? Can you create custom campaigns and help obtain patient reviews? Is there a contract?

You want a system that is easy to implement, use, and maintain. When you have a challenge, you

need to have reliable customer support. Patient communication systems are integral to your day-to-day practice operations now. You can text patient forms for them to update before they even step foot in your office. When they complete them, you get an alert, and with a click of a button it writes the information into your practice management system! Gone are the days of printing any patient forms. It saves paper and time when you do not have to scan the document into the patient chat.

While researching any new technology, I suggest you add one step in your process; ask your AADOM Tribe! AADOM members are very helpful and want you and your team to succeed. Together we have quite a few years of experience and have tried many things between our practices and teams. Reach out and ask in a forum; plenty of members are always happy to help! ■

### ...DENTAL WAVE CONTINUED

Make a list. Have an ASAP list to call from so that you can accommodate anyone who might want to come in sooner. Add to the team, even

if it's only temporary. In our case, we learned we had to add an extra employee. As in any situation, if you are getting more emergencies and cleaning requests, you need

the manpower to provide the care. The phone is ringing, emails are coming in, and the text messages are plentiful.

A dental wave is office revenue. You want to look at a way to build and grow the business while also meeting the needs of your clients. In the end, the overall key to success is to have happy patients that want to keep coming back. ■



## MEET THE MEMBER

Claudia has over 20 years of dental experience. She began her career as a dental assistant and transitioned into a management role at Bell Family Dentistry in Cary, where she has led the practice for more than a decade and was recognized as Practice Administrator of distinction in 2019. Claudia achieved her AADOM Diplomate recognition in 2021 and serves as a board member for the AADOM Triangle Area Chapter. She and her family live in Apex, North Carolina.