Editorial

Dental Support Organizations [DSOs]

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Editorial

Amazing as it seems, dentists go through four years of dental school amassing $300,000 in student loans to become licensed … but they are not required to take a single business class. In the 1970s, the idea of “Divide & Conquer” created the DSO industry. Dentists realized that with the right support team, they would be able to concentrate on providing quality dental care for their patients and their practices would thrive. While a DSO can be a valuable asset to a dental practice, it is vital that they do not try to mix business and dentistry.

Over the years, DSOs have notoriously "crossed the line" between the hallway and the Operatory. Many DSOs believe that the dentists should give up both financial and clinical Control to promote the “business” aspect of their practice. Specifying time allotments and Instituting production based compensation is unethical. Dictating how a dentist should diagnose and plan treatments are unequivocally unethical. The control of a patient's dental Health should always be left to the licensed dentist without interference from the practices “Business” department.

Some DSOs imply that the Dentist has to be “a team player” - this is a huge mistake. The Dentist is the owner and, more importantly, the coach of the team. The auxiliary staff should do whatever it takes to enhance the doctor/patient relationship and the hygienist/patient relationship. They should provide the clearest possible picture to the dentist enabling them to focus on providing the best care for the patients.

A good DSO should provide the dentist and the key staff members with a clear and concise summary of factors that affect the practice’s sustainability. In fact, there are six key indicators that should be available to the dentist on a "daily dashboard". These indicators will allow you to remain abreast of the financial health of the practice and permit you to focus your full attention on the dental health of your patients.

Business methods can help a dental practice stay in “business”, but dentistry cannot be managed in the same way. Performing dental procedures has nothing to do with business and business people have not been trained in dental procedures. Dentists who truly understand this concept will be successful and their patients will be much happier with their experience.

The most important question to any member of your team … including DSO staff … must be, “what is in the best interest of the patient’s dental health?” If at any time you feel that this question is not top-of-mind with a person involved in your practice, it’s time to reconsider that relationship.

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