



Mind and body increase profit

Mind and body concepts have been in vogue for thousands of years. It is now time for dentists to use them for the benefit of their businesses. Being physically fit has a myriad of benefits, such as reducing the heart rate, boosting the immune system and frequently lowering blood pressure. Working out makes one feel better, especially through the natural release of endorphins and enkephalins. Diet and rest are equally as important for overall health. Personally, being physically fit, I know, makes me much more productive.

Your patients' well-being should be as important to you as your own. As dentists, it is our obligation to treat dental disease. Recognizing and identifying potential periodontal and endodontic problems result in more necessary dentistry. If the general dentist is not comfortable or equipped to handle these services, a referral to a specialist is good business. Appropriate referrals are a huge patient benefit. Patients appreciate the best possible care.

A referral to a physician for a diagnostic test also results in a healthier, happier patient. I was so enamored by our in-office CT technology that I decided to take an elective heart scan. Much to my surprise, I was what the heart scan commercials were promoting. I thought that due to my exercising, diet and sleeping regimens, I was in excellent health. In reality, I was a walking heart attack waiting to happen. A straight-forward, elective medicated stent was placed; I am now ticking like a Swiss watch. I've told my patients, friends and referring dentists my tale of woe. As a result, a supposedly healthy general dentist had the heart scan and found severe occlusion in all his coronary vessels. A life-saving medical procedure was performed and his myocardial health has been optimized.

Building referral networks with dental and medical specialists fosters a higher level of patient care and helps avoid potential problems. In the referral process, the ultimate winner should be the patient. Through quality referrals, a general dentist's relationship with his or her patient is reinforced. The patient sees that quality of care is the dentist's top concern.

How can general dentists use their minds in order to

help their patients? Here are three ways:

- Putting themselves in their patients' shoes
- "Wowing" their patients
- Creating more sound business practices.

By putting yourself in your patients' shoes, you can better understand their fears, needs and desires. You need to be very sensitive to their pain. Patients do not seek comprehensive dental care—or any dental care—because they are afraid of being hurt. Better local anesthetic techniques, pre-medication, and listening more closely to their concerns can eliminate many of these problems.

Don't allow your patients to wait. Schedule appropriately, and when unavoidable delays occur, call in advance or take the time to explain and apologize accordingly. Your patients' time should be more important than yours.

Go the extra mile to "wow" your patients. Give a genuine 125 percent of yourself. Put them on a pedestal and often they will put you on one, too. Calling after a procedure to check on their well being is always patient-friendly. More importantly, problems can be recognized and dealt with earlier. I often give my patients my cell phone number; this has been a huge practice enhancer. Surprisingly the calls that are generated are extremely few in number, especially since I make the first contact.

In today's economy we continually need to be creative and incorporate sound business practices to succeed. Excellent clinical techniques are not enough in a volatile and changing marketplace. We must also be a businessman, psychologist, communicator and healer. One needs to conduct business better in order to be singled out from the rest. Pay close attention to all facets of your practice. You should not be afraid to amend and shift business protocols.

A healthy body and a creative mind are two of the dentist's biggest assets. A fit body for you and your patient with an active mind yields financial growth. ■

Dr. Greene is a board-certified oral and maxillofacial surgeon. He may be reached at (773)327-2400 and www.lpinstitute.com.