

PRACTICE BUILDERS

7 GREAT REASONS To Sell Home Care Products From Your Dental Office!



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These are exciting times in dentistry. Technological advances have improved every aspect of leading a practice, from administration to supplies to patient treatment. This means, however, that we have many CHOICES to make as we begin, maintain, and ultimately, upgrade and improve our office setting. Which software program should I buy? Which impression material should I use? Which laboratory should I use for my aesthetic cases? Choices everywhere!

And, it's not just you that has choices. So do your patients — particularly when it comes to home care. Oral hygiene products constitute a multi-billion dollar industry. There are hundreds of toothpastes, mouthrinses, etc., to choose from. Go down the “dental aisle” of your local pharmacy, and check out what is there.

Now, put yourself in your patient's shoes. They just completed periodontal work, or orthodontics, or had six veneers placed. What do they buy to maintain their new smile and support the likely thousands of dollars they spent at your office? In

the past, as dental professionals, we were “comfortable” telling them to generically “brush, floss, rinse ...” It is different now. They expect more guidance from us. And, we must recognize that no matter how good our clinical skills are, even the best dentistry will break down (sooner) with improper home care and maintenance.

So ... here are SEVEN great reasons to customize, and actually dispense (SELL) home care products from your dental office:

#7 It sets your practice apart!

Since most offices still don't provide specific home care and instructions, those that do will be looked upon as caring and “state-of-the-art”. A patient recognizes they are getting special treatment when you say to them, “Mrs. Jones, we realize that you are making a significant time and financial commitment in getting your dental work done. So, in order to insure that you will be able to enjoy the benefits of your new smile for as long as possible, we are going to set you up with a specific home care program”

#6 You will get more new patients!

Patients will tell other people about the program you put them on, and soon other family members, friends, and co-workers will be scheduling an appointment with your “progressive” office. This is one of the best practice building tools you can use! The best part about it is that these referrals tend to be high quality — they are coming to you because you provide FULL SERVICE dentistry!

#5 You get to have some “control” over their hygiene!

Let's face it. We can't go home with our patients and make them brush every night. Couple that with allowing them to buy whatever they want at the stores, and the results can be disastrous. Even writing a prescription doesn't always help. The surveys show that 70 percent of scripts don't ever get filled! Setting them up with their hygiene regimen at the office, giving them instructions, having them PAY for it right then and there, and having them GO HOME WITH IT, is without a doubt the best formula for success.

#4 Patients are confused

We mentioned before the sheer number of choices they are faced with while in the pharmacy aisle. Patients attempt to decide what to buy, with a kid tugging on their shirt, a budget to consider, and an appointment they have to get to in ten minutes. They ask the clerk what to buy. How does the clerk know what is best for them?

Given all these factors, the chances are they will purchase either what is on sale, OR what looks “pretty”. It’s safe to say they aren’t making the right decision for their dental needs. And, it’s not their fault. Tartar control. Smoker’s tooth polishes. Whitening products. Desensitizing formulations. Baking soda. Peroxide. Alcohol. Blue. Green. Red. How COULD you know what to buy? Do you know that most people will buy hard bristle brushes, high-abrasive pastes, and high-alcohol content rinses, when they are left to decide on their own?

#3 Convenience

Families have very busy schedules these days. Going to the store to pick up dental products isn’t always high on their priority list! Patients would much rather YOU tell them what to use, and get it right at your office. Wouldn’t you? When you are a consumer (outside of your dental office) and go to a dermatologist, chiropractor, or bring your dog to the veterinarian, don’t you very often pick up what you need at their office? Isn’t that convenience a big help to you, rather than searching for it in the store? Absolutely!

#2 Passive income

Your dental office is a business. And, your time is valuable. You expect to get paid for providing treatment. You should also get paid for providing home care instructions. Just by making the shift from telling a patient to “brush, floss, etc.”

to “brush with this, rinse with this...”, you are able to add THOUSANDS of dollars to your monthly profits. This is what we call PASSIVE INCOME — you aren’t doing any more dentistry, seeing more patients, or working more hours. As your practice grows, and your overhead grows with it, you’ll begin to see the value and beauty of this.

#1 Support your cosmetic dentistry

This is the PRIMARY reason to dispense home care. It’s no secret that a good portion of your practice will be devoted to cosmetic procedures and services — composite resins, veneers, tooth whitening, etc. Much of it is “elective” — patients are requesting an improvement in their smiles, and you are providing it for them. They are spending a good penny to do this.

It is ESSENTIAL that this dentistry is supported by safe, high-quality, products that don’t stain teeth, don’t dry out tissues, and don’t abrade. Choose products that don’t have dyes or colorings. Choose products that don’t use alcohol (in addition to burning and drying the mouth, alcohol has been shown in some studies to shrink resins and/or degrade bonding agents). Choose LOW-abrasion toothpastes. Remember, if they go to the store, chances are they will strike

out in EACH of these categories. Now, the final question is, “which product line(s) do I carry and recommend?” The good news is that the majority of home care products being introduced in dentistry are alcohol-free. They use agents like essential oils, zinc and sodium chlorite, which freshen breath, and maintain a healthy mouth without drying the oral cavity and having to “kill all the bugs.”

The key, however, is to TEST THE PRODUCTS YOURSELF. Don’t just carry something because it looks good, or there is a study to back it. Use it yourself. Have your hygienist use it. If you notice a difference in your clean mouth, imagine what it will do for your patients! You can now tell Mrs. Jones: “We are customizing a home care program for you ... In fact, I use it myself.” It doesn’t get any simpler than that!

Dr. Anthony Stefanou maintains a private practice in the New York City area. He was the co-founder of the Tri-State Fresh Breath Center, and has lectured internationally on such topics such as retailing in the dental office, halitosis treatment, developing profit centers in the dental practice, and benefits of alcohol-free home care. His articles have been published in several dental publications, including RDH and The Profitable Dentist.

