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“Stop Zombie Mouth”

Campaign Offering Tooth-Friendly Alternative to Sugary Halloween Treats

The American Dental Association, the leading source of oral health-related information, and PopCap Games, a leading digital games creator and a division of EA, announced a joint campaign aimed at encouraging good oral health among U.S. children and their parents. Kicking off the “Stop Zombie Mouth” campaign will continue through Halloween, and will feature PopCap’s family-friendly hit video game, *Plants vs. Zombies™* as a tooth-friendly alternative to candy. PopCap will give away millions of copies of the game, more than a million free packs of game-inspired trading cards, and other themed items with tips to keep teeth healthy, brought to life by the title’s beloved “fundead” icons as well as new characters created just for the campaign.

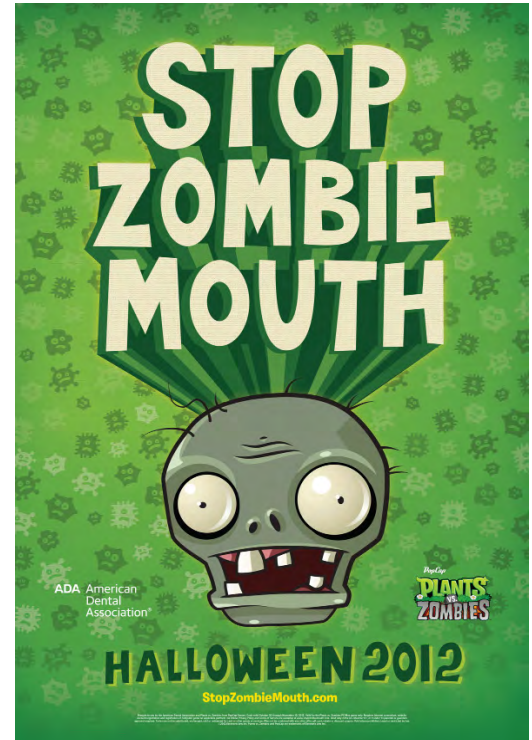
Parents and other adults who host trick-or-treating children on Halloween can obtain the free game coupons (redeemable for the full PC/Mac edition of *Plants vs. Zombies*) via participating ADA member dentists nationwide or by downloading them from www.stopzombiemouth.com. The coupons, trading cards and other themed materials are designed to raise awareness of the importance of kids’ oral health in addition to providing a fun alternative to sugary treats on Halloween night.

“Tooth decay is five times more prevalent than asthma and results in more than 51 million hours of missed school each year. Diet plays an important role in oral health. Too much sugar can lead to cavities down the road, which is why the ADA is proud to team up with PopCap on the ‘Stop Zombie Mouth’ campaign,” said Dr. William Calnon, president of the ADA.

“Tooth decay in children is almost entirely preventable,” said Dr. Jonathan Shenkin, ADA spokesperson on pediatric dentistry. “Brushing twice a day with fluoride toothpaste and eating a balanced diet can lead to improved oral health and improved overall health. Working collaboratively, we can educate whole families in a fun way about the importance of proper oral health habits.”

“We at PopCap have been interested in the potential for video games to provide benefits beyond entertainment for many years,” said John Vechey, PopCap co-founder and franchise studio director at PopCap. “We’re passionate about the very important cause behind the ‘Stop Zombie Mouth’ campaign and proud to be highlighting yet another positive effect that games can have on society.”

“We usually buy and give away a small mountain of candy at Halloween,” said Liza Geonie of Northport, NY, who plays *Plants vs. Zombies* with her 5-year old son. “Now we’ll be presenting trick-or-treaters with a choice: a piece of candy or a free video game. We feel great about giving kids a healthier option that’s a ton of fun, and we’re planning on buying MUCH less candy this year!”





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Join us for a Webinar on November 9th!

Online Marketing 101- The Searching Patient

Join us on Friday, November 9th at 9:00 am for a 40 minute educational webinar. This course will discuss the ever-growing importance of creating an online presence for your practice! Space is limited! Reserve your Webinar seat now: www4.gotomeeting.com/register/783390135. After registering you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the Webinar!



Online Marketing 101 – The Searching Patient

Join us for a Webinar on November 9

This free educational webinar is made possible by the SCDA Member Benefits Group

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This course will discuss the ever-growing importance of creating an online presence for your practice. We will start by examining the many ways a patient can search for a new local dentist online, from search engines and consumer sites to mobile devices, online reviews and Facebook. We will then review the core tools and strategies you need to start taking control of your online presence, including a practice website, local search marketing, reputation management, social media and a fully-functional mobile website.

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- How to earn a top search ranking for your local area on major search engines, such as Google
- How to increase new patient referrals with Facebook and blogging
- How to improve your online image and secure new appointments through reputation management and positive patient reviews
- How to effectively reach patients from virtually any location with a mobile website

Webinar:

Online Marketing 101 –
The Searching Patient

Fri, November 9, 2012

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Meeting the Needs of Individuals with Limited English Proficiency

By Rebekah Mathews, DentaQuest

As partners of the Healthy Connections Medicaid program, DentaQuest and participating providers are both required to make accommodations to meet the needs of beneficiaries with Limited English Proficiency (LEP). LEP individuals do not speak English as their primary language and have a limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English.

In addition to maintaining bilingual staff, DentaQuest contracts with Certified Languages International (CLI) to accommodate non-English speaking members. This professional language company specializes in phone interpreter services and provides translation in more than 150 languages. Their representatives are experienced in medical and insurance terminology. If a member contacts our call center and prefers to speak in their language, we will place a conference call to CLI who will in turn provide immediate translation services during the course of our call. To learn more about LEP, take a self-assessment test or access state specific resources, please visit www.lep.gov.

Overcoming Language Barriers

Communicating diagnosis and treatment information can be challenging, especially when crossing a language barrier. When communicating with a beneficiary for whom English is not a primary language, please consider the following: **Translation** If translation is needed, family members can often act as translators. Local service agencies and community centers also offer translation services.

Written documentation If you offer non-covered services that require out of pocket fees, it is beneficial to communicate financial responsibility and pricing information to patients in their primary language whenever possible. It is always recommended that any out of pocket or private payment arrangements be outlined to the patient and his/her consent documented at the point of intake.

As always, we thank you for your support of the Healthy Connections dental program. If you have suggestions for Medicaid topics that you wish us to cover in future SCDA bulletins, please share them with Maie Brunson brunsonm@scda.org.



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SCDA Mission

The South Carolina Dental Association represents member dentists in order to promote and provide optimal oral health care to all citizens of the state of South Carolina by serving as an advocate to advance the profession of dentistry.

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Call the SCDA office and ask for a retired affidavit so that you can continue to receive all the member benefits you've come to enjoy and expect, but at a quarter of the cost! You can also request a free copy of "Closing a Dental Practice" or click here to go to the SCDA's website to download a copy. Contact Christy Meador at 800-327-2598 or by emailing her at meadorc@scda.org.

1 out of every 10 dentists will suffer from alcohol or drug abuse at some time in their lives.

If you or someone you know needs help, contact the SCDA's Dental Assistance and Advocacy Committee: 800.327.2598

Are Your Workplace Posters Current?

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Looking for a New Children's Book for your Office?

In "Caraboose: The Tooth Fairy Moose" (ISBN 1466317337), Lynn Swanson creates a humorous tale for elementary-aged children who are losing their first teeth. The story centers around a creature who is a cross between a caribou and a moose, creatively named Caraboose Moose. Just because the tooth fairies are on vacation doesn't mean the lost teeth of little children go uncollected, so Caraboose acts as a stand-in. Children will enjoy hearing about the fabulous vacations that tooth fairies take and about the fun Caraboose has when he steps in to save the day. With whimsical rhymes and advice, Caraboose promises the children that when he gives the teeth to the fairies for their brew, "magic will float back to you."

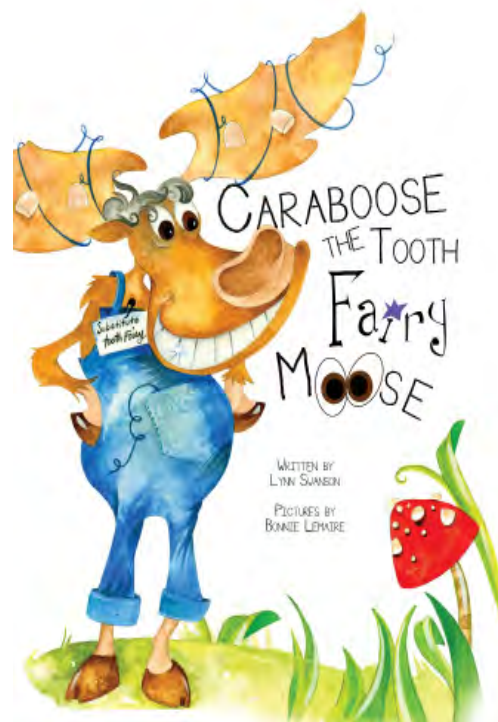
The rhyming throughout the story will keep readers laughing as they turn the pages and read creative verses, such as "You have to believe in the fairy-tooth moose while shaking and wiggling your tooth 'til it's loose, then carry it home in your pocket from school, keep it in there while watching TV as a rule."

Swanson's lighthearted poem can be enjoyed as a bed time story or while waiting to see the dentist. It is fun for very young children to turn the brightly illustrated pages, and easy for older children to read.

"I thought it would be fun to show children the humorous side of losing a tooth," said Swanson. "My book helps children imagine what it's like to be a tooth fairy or a tooth fairy moose."

The illustrations and comical poem pave the way for children who are getting ready to lose their baby teeth for the first time. Readers young and old will laugh at the gangly Caraboose and his antics as he fills in for the tooth fairies.

"Caraboose: The Tooth Fairy Moose" is available for sale online at Amazon.com and other channels.



Master Calendar

October 5	SCDA Board Meeting	SCDA Office	9:00 AM
October 12	Piedmont District Fall Meeting	Poinsett Club	8:00 AM
October 12	SCDA MBG Board Meeting	SCDA Office	9:00 AM
October 18-23	ADA Annual Meeting	San Francisco, CA	
October 19	Radiation Safety Exam	Midlands Tech- Airport Campus	11:00 AM
October 26	Coastal District Fall Meeting	College Center at Trident Tech	7:00 AM

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6 Daily Habits for Facebook Marketing Success

By Donna Newman, Co-Founder of SummaSocial.com



INVITE – to help you generate targeted prospects

1. Ask Patients to 'like' your page
2. Find & 'Like' New Fan Pages



ENGAGE – so your business stays top-of-mind & word-of-mouth

1. Make Wall Post
2. Make 2 Comments, 2 Likes, 1 Share



CONVERT – to build BRAND exposure, traffic, customer service, relationships & leads

1. Check "Notifications" & welcome New Fans
2. Check "Notifications" & follow-up to Fans' comments & likes

Everyone knows about Facebook. Some small & medium-size dental offices have even taken the first step by creating a business page; however, *many are still challenged* by how to maximize Facebook's potential to build brand loyalty, customer service and even targeted prospects. While there's no "one-size-fits-all" approach, my team has identified 3 stations (Invite > Engage > Convert) and 6 daily habits that will help your dental office, whether you're just getting started with Facebook Marketing or trying to take your efforts to the next level.



INVITE – to help you generate more targeted 'likes'

1. Ask Patients to 'like' your page - Facebook doesn't only connect you with current patients and prospects, it also connects your current patients and prospects together. Patients who have enjoyed your services can be encouraged to share their experiences with their Facebook friends. This way, they act as your brand evangelists and Facebook can act as *a referral service for your business*. So, announce (via text, email, in-office, and at time of check-out) that patients who "like" your Facebook Business Fan Page are entitled to same-day discounts, promotions, contests or freebies (e.g., new toothbrush for every new Fan). This can be an on-going way to attract new viewers to your Page and new clients to your clinic as well as reward current patients.

Action: Create a 'We've Gone Social' image to distribute to your client database via email. In it, have the link to 'like' your Facebook Page. As well, have a computer or iPad at your check-in or check-out counter specifically for patients to log into Facebook and 'like' your Page. Plus, they might even personalize a post on your Wall.

2. Find & 'Like' New Fan Pages of local merchants or industry leaders – By stepping outside of your own Facebook page and spending time on other pages (via your Page newsfeed), you let your Fans and peers know that your dental office truly does care about them. Knowing what they are thinking is invaluable for building trust, business relationships, and even raving Fans! Building relationships with local merchants, who have a loyal Facebook community, will help promote your dental office to local prospects. In turn, these prospects could be within driving distance of your clinic.

Action: Access [PAGE DIRECTORY](#) feature- When at this feature, browse to easily see the Pages you administrate and the pages you've 'liked'. Especially search the Local Businesses & Places so you can build relationships with your neighboring merchants.

Action: SEARCH FOR PAGES (while using Facebook as Page) – See top-right of Facebook's blue bar > click drop-down arrow > click "Use Facebook As" > select your business page name. The pages you 'like' from your Business Profile will appear in your Business Newsfeed. Whenever your Page comments on their posts, your business name & photo appear with a hyperlink to your Business Fan Page. Your valuable comments within their original posts could spur on more Page 'likes' for your dental team by targeted and local prospects.



ENGAGE – so your business stays top-of-mind & word-of-mouth

3. Make Wall Post -You'll quickly notice successful brands on Facebook don't preach or sell to their fan base, rather they engage by entertaining and educating them. What information related to your niche do your Fans, prospects and clients want to know? To set yourself apart from your competition and keep your Fans engaged in *your* content, provide useful and entertaining content to your growing audience on a consistent basis. Follow our Rule of E's: *educate, engage, and entertain your Fans*.

Action: Create a Posting Plan or Editorial Calendar complete with themes for days, times, and frequency. (See Donna's July article for a weekly calendar of posting themes.) Quick Tips:

- **1st Idea:** [Deliver Expertise](#) – a tip, educational video, photo, industry article, or a response to something in your local news
- **2nd Idea:** [Post New Status](#) – office themes, what's the dentist up to today, community involvement, change in office hours, or event at dental office
- **3rd Idea:** [Entertain](#) – industry trivia with photo, fill-in-the-blank posts, or funny dental video

Action: Facebook and the Internet, in general, have given your customer a much louder voice when talking about your dental products and services. So, to continue to provide customer service excellence, you must monitor and plan to address and resolve customer complaints when posted on your Wall. If you can remedy a negative post by listening to their concerns & solving their problem, then you've shown your stellar customer service – everyone has witnessed it! Make sure you've got a dedicated team that keeps an eye on your Facebook Page for quick-time and relevant follow-up.

Continued on page 10

Continued from page 9

4. Make 2 Comments, 2 Likes, 1 Share within your Page newsfeed. These engagements are the *real conversations that build and sustain relationships plus deliver remarkable customer service*. Identify great third-party content from your newsfeed and share it with your Facebook community. This SHARE gesture enriches your Fans and helps you build relationships and possibly partnerships with peers. Quick Tips:

- **Be yourself:** Talk to others in the same style you would talk to a friend over lunch. Oh, before you click 'post', read through your post and make sure it sounds genuine and not a 'pitch'.
- **Be brief:** If your post is too long, it will be easily overlooked. To get more people reading your post, quickly get to the point.
- **General ideas:** Pay a compliment; ask an open-ended question; add insightful advice or comments*; sometimes link back to your business with "sneak peeks" about new products; link to your educational video or even coupons.

Action: To access your Business Page Newsfeed, see top-right corner, blue banner of Facebook > click downward arrow in blue banner > Choose "Use Facebook as Page" > Select Fan Page > Select Home > start engaging. Now, every 'like', comment, or share you make will post as Your Brand logo. In the Home/Newsfeed of your Page, you'll only see the Wall Posts from the very Pages that your Page has 'liked.'



CONVERT –build BRAND exposure, traffic, customer service, relationships & even new patients

5. Check "Notifications" & welcome New Fans with a personalized Facebook email. To every new Fan, send a "Thank You" or "Nice Meeting You" private Facebook email within 24 hours (via your personal profile), which shows you're serious about customer service and want their business. From your personal profile, you can send a message to any Facebook user even if you're not Facebook Friends; however, business page administrators can only respond to messages initiated by Fans. Getting Fans is important, but if you don't do customer service and lead conversion opportunities, you will not justify your Facebook marketing efforts.

Here's the art and science behind a personable email follow-up. A general New Fan Script has 4 parts:

1. Greeting with Name of Person 2. Tell person why you are reaching out (e.g., thanks for 'liking' our page) 3. Provide them a valuable benefit.(e.g., coupon, promotion) 4. Closing Greeting & Your Name.

Action: Write your own or personalize our sample dental script and start messaging today. *"Hi Name, Thanks for LIKING our (name of Fan Page)! We noticed you live in our area. Attached is a Coupon for a FREE Whitening when you become a new patient...use it anytime because it never expires! And, when you SHARE the offer with a friend, we'll enter you into our monthly drawing for a FREE Sonicare toothbrush."* Your Smile Team at NAME DENTAL OFFICE [Make sure you attach a PDF for your coupon in the Facebook message, if applicable.]

6. Check "Notifications" & follow-up to Fans' comments and likes - Simply respond to likes and comments within 24 hours on your Wall with quickly-written Appreciation Messages to build relationships and stay top-of-mind with your Fans and friends of Fans. When you value your patients enough to engage them, you boost their perceived value of your team and your service. In turn, they're likely to find both the desire and time to repeat purchases and spread the word about your Dental BRAND.

When logging into Facebook, you will notice red numbered alerts if there's activity for friend requests/new Fans, inbox messages, and notifications. These 3 icons are located in the upper left-hand corner of your Facebook account.



Action: Switch and "Use Facebook as Page". Now the icons left-to-right are specific to your Business Fan Page: people [i.e. new Fans], a comment bubble [i.e. inbox messages from Fans], and a globe [i.e. overall new-activity notifications]. To follow-up to Fans' comments and likes, refer to the GLOBE.

- Click on their name and view their profile.
- Back to your wall post where they added their commentary, click on "comment" where you'll @tag their name and write an Appreciation Message to continue the conversation.

By consistently using 6 Daily Habits for Facebook Marketing Success, you can drive more traffic, exposure & leads as well as show genuine interest in your Facebook Community & build lasting patient relationships – within *just a few minutes and up to an hour a day*. **After all, the difference between a professional and an amateur is rarely talent; it's often having a strategy and being consistent in its execution.** To solely rely on Facebook and these 6 inbound marketing habits to increase patient recall and new patient conversion would be foolish. However, Industry Stats show 58% of Fans are more likely to buy from the brands they 'like'. **So, be sure to *bake a little Facebook* into your overall marketing strategy today.

Footnotes:

*Consider HEPPA guidelines

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Donna Newman co-founded SummaSocial.com. She is a recognized thought leader in her field, a vibrant speaker, and consultant known for her practical social media marketing solutions! Her clients include Corporations (Smart Practice, ForRent.com, Scottsdale Law Group), Associations (AZ American Dental Association), Foundations (Lost Angels Foundation of Hope), and Small Business Owners (dentists, doctors, realtors, store-front retailers). Email her at Donna@SummaSocial.com.

Employers Beware- Your Confidentiality Polices May Now be Unlawful!

The National Labor Relations Board (the "NLRB" or the "Board") has issued an opinion that affects virtually ALL employers, declaring that companies' Confidentiality Policies may be unlawful if their restrictions and prohibitions on disclosure of information are too broad.

The Board has long taken the position that an employer's prohibition of an employee from discussing his or her salary with others to be a violation of the employee's protections under the National Labor Relations Act (the "NLRA" or the "Act"). Yet many employers still caution employees that they are not to talk about their salary or disclose it to any other employee.

Section 7 of the Act protects every employee's right to engage in "protected concerted activity." Protected concerted activity is now given to mean discussing pay, salary and benefits with others, whether another employee, or perhaps a union, without fear of retaliation or retribution.

The Board has expanded this prohibition to confidentiality policies which employers distribute, require employees to sign, or place in a policy manual or employee handbook and distribute to employees. If such policies include provisions prohibiting employees from discussing private employee information, such as salaries or disciplinary action, these policies may be deemed to be unlawful and sanctionable by the Board.

Employers should review the confidentiality policies or agreements they have in place with their employees to ensure compliance with current Board law, and revise them, if necessary, in order to gain the full protection of the policy or agreement without running afoul of the law.

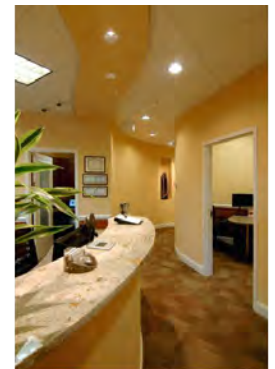


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Would you consider interproximal reduction (IPR) of teeth as a treatment option for your patients? Please share your opinion by taking this quick 5-10 minute survey that will help shed light on the perception of IPR among dental professionals and patients. Click [here](#) to view the survey! Survey done by Elvi Barcoma, a D4 student at VCU School of Dentistry.



If you have not already joined the SCDA Facebook page you are missing out! We have recently moved all of our pictures from Shutterfly to our Facebook page. We have posted pictures from our conventions and the 2012 DAD project. You can save the pictures, tag yourself and share them with other friends on Facebook. Join our group today! www.facebook.com/scdental.



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President's Message

Do you remember from your days in elementary school local firemen/women visiting your school for an assembly teaching fire safety tips? I remember climbing aboard the fire truck and wondering what all the knobs and wheels would actually do if I could just get a chance to push or spin them! A couple of years ago we took our son to the downtown Spartanburg fire station for their event for children during fire safety month. Chaz got to try on a real fire suit and hat, holding the hoses and learning about fire safety at 3 years old he could repeat STOP! DROP! & ROLL! with the best of them.



Dr. Betsy Jabbour

Next month happens to be fire safety month, I remember as we attended the very weekend we arrived home from an ADA annual meeting, usually in October, and as Chaz has picked out his Halloween costume-you guessed it! A fireman's suit.

There are some striking similarities between the SCDA and Firemen. The SCDA may not put out actual fires, but it does provide many 'safety tips' to help members avoid being burned by misunderstood regulations, legislation that could harm the profession and public, and help to decode insurance and Medicaid issues. Think of our staff and some of the leadership as firemen/women for dentistry! Wonder what Phil Latham and Jim Mercer would look like in a fireman's hat??? Hum...

Over the past year the SCDA has made an effort to get an understanding of dental practice marketing and how new and emerging marketing businesses fit into our practice act. Living Social and Groupon are examples of which the ADA has written [ethical and legal commentary](#). The Council on Ethics, Bylaws and Judicial Affairs crafted the following that is now part of the ADA Code of Ethics: **4.E.1. SPLIT FEES IN ADVERTISING AND MARKETING SERVICES.**

The prohibition against a dentist's accepting or tendering rebates or split fees applies to business dealings between dentists and any third party, not just other dentists. Thus, a dentist who pays for advertising or marketing services by sharing a specified portion of the professional fees collected from prospective or actual patients with the vendor providing the advertising or marketing services is engaged in fee splitting. The prohibition against fee splitting is also applicable to the marketing of dental treatments or procedures via "social coupons" if the business arrangement between the dentist and the concern providing the marketing services for that treatment or those procedures allows the issuing company to collect the fee from the prospective patient, retain a defined percentage or portion of the revenue collected as payment for the coupon marketing service provided to the dentist and remit to the dentist the remainder of the amount collected.

Dentists should also be aware that the laws or regulations in their jurisdictions may contain provisions that impact the division of revenue collected from prospective patients between a dentist and a third party to pay for advertising or marketing services.

As a members of the ADA we have all agreed to abide by the Code of Ethics when accepting membership.

Our state board has an opinion in their [minutes](#) as to the illegality of such split fees with third parties as they pertain to our current practice act. As you have probably read in the latest issue of the ADA News, the state of Oregon has been dealing with these marketing issues for a while. As stated in the legal opinion link above there may be federal issues that could apply.

I wanted to bring this to your attention as there have been a number of inquiries from both members and patients. Sometimes the right or legal path is not easily seen, it is the desire of the SCDA to keep members informed of changes and to help clarify when the issues are muddy giving the best information possible when making decisions concerning decisions affecting your practice.

In addition to the above, national and state legislation regarding employment issues, the Affordable Care Act (ACA), Red Flags Rules, taxation of dental prostheses, uncovered services and anesthesia regulation have and are being addressed as you read this.

The ADA has been very busy helping the North Carolina Dental Society defend their laws against the FTC concerning dental whitening by dentists. Our state and national lobbying teams monitor legislation daily forwarding information to our leaders when they suspect it will affect the practice of dentistry. This month the SCDA forwarded an opinion to the state concerning enactment of the ACA in SC, based on information from our lobby team. The SCDA has also been investigating issues concerning Medicaid and DentaQuest claims, keeping the communication open between our members and DentaQuest in an effort to handle any problems and alleviate filing and payment problems.

The SCDA also helps keep members up to date on OSHA regulations, DHEC regulations and offers CE to help keep members and their staff up to date on state requirements. Your state association has been active in helping with loan repayment for dentists who choose to practice in underserved areas by fighting for funding of the Rural Incentive Program, which our Governor placed in the annual budget this year.

Anytime you have a question concerning your practice (of dentistry, not sure you'll find a lot of help for your practice of yoga, but you never know) the staff and leadership of the SCDA are ready and willing to help and find answers. Yes, I too, have often wondered if the check I write for my dues each year gives me enough return for the investment. Then I remember all that we've discussed and dealt with throughout the past year. I always come out on the positive side of the argument, big time. It's definitely WORTH the price of membership! As a matter of fact, it's quite a bargain.

Dental Practice Safety Tip #1- Be a member of the SCDA!



Chaz the Firefighter!

"Yes, I too, have often wondered if the check I write for my dues each year gives me enough return for the investment..."



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Executive Director's Notes



Mr. Phil Latham

Not a month goes by without me getting a phone call from a member dentist with certain legal questions. Recently, the below two items have been asked a lot so I wanted to pass this along to the full membership. The issues involve child abuse and legal age of consent.

What are the legal requirements of a dentist regarding child abuse?

South Carolina law requires that certain professionals report suspected cases of child abuse or neglect. Because they have unique opportunities to observe and interact with children, the following professionals are mandated reporters of child abuse or neglect: physicians, nurses, **dentists**, optometrists, medical examiners, etc.

When should these cases be reported?

A decision to report must be based upon a reasonable belief that a child has been or may be abused or neglected. Thus, mandatory reporters need not have conclusive proof that a child has been abused or neglected prior to reporting abuse or neglect to the proper authorities. A person who is required to report and fails to do so is guilty of a misdemeanor.

Where to report?

Reports should be made to the county department of social services or to law enforcement in the county where the child resides or is found. When the alleged perpetrator of the abuse or neglect is not the child's parent, guardian, or other person responsible for the child's welfare, the law requires that a report be made to law enforcement. All law enforcement officers are authorized to exercise emergency protective custody to protect a child who might be in imminent and substantial danger.

"South Carolina law requires that certain professionals report suspected cases of child abuse or neglect"

What is the age of consent for dentistry?

The age of consent for health services, which includes dental services, is 16.

Can a patient sign a contract relating to dentistry services and be bound if the patient is only 17?

A 17 year old patient can be bound to a contract for dental services if the services are deemed "necessary," and the minor is not living and/or being supported by his/her parents at the time the services are rendered. Dental services are generally characterized as necessary to the life of a minor.

In South Carolina, the age of consent to any health service, including dentistry, is sixteen years of age. S.C. Code Ann. § 63-5-340 (1976) states: Any minor who has reached the age of sixteen years may consent to any health services from a person authorized by law to render the particular health service for himself and the consent of no other person shall be necessary unless such involves an operation which shall be performed only if such is essential to the health or life of such child in the opinion of the performing physician and a consultant physician if one is available.

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By Mark Brown



Mr. Mark Brown

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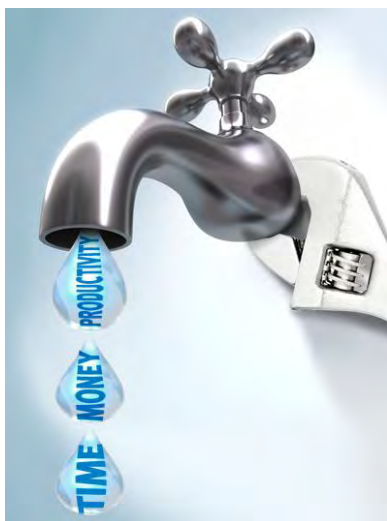
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Preventative Measures Ensure the Health of Your Accounts Receivable

By TekCollect

Running a dental practice is no small task. In addition to clinical expertise and patient care, you have to manage every facet of your *business*. From staying on the leading edge of new medical developments and products, to monitoring ever-changing dental insurance protocol and plans, to simply overseeing the fundamental day-to-day operations.

But there is one area of your practice that can be streamlined to significantly improve your cash flow, minimize delinquencies and optimize fiscal operations. Your accounts receivable and collections can be economically and efficiently managed by a savvy combination of internal efforts and the partnership of a third party resource.

Internal Practices Minimize Overall Delinquencies

In many instances, accounts receivable managers focus on pursuing accounts that have aged beyond 60-90 days. But age is the greatest deteriorating factor in the collectability of an account, so these efforts often generate minimal recovery results. The good news is, there are simple internal measures you can take to minimize the number of accounts that ever reach 60 days delinquent. In fact, statistics have shown that you can reduce that number by as much as 50% by implementing these steps:

- **Seek full payment or make clear payment arrangements at the time of service.** It may sound obvious, but patient communication is an integral part of effective accounts receivable management. You have the greatest opportunity to prevent delinquencies from ever occurring by seeking remittance or discussing terms when the patient is at the practice.
- Once you know the amount the insurance provider is covering, and thus the amount the patient owes, bill the patient immediately. If payment is not received in 15 days, **place a call to the patient.** Often good-faith arrangements can be made just by re-opening the lines of communication. And if you've discussed payment upfront, there are no surprises. This call is also a great opportunity to follow-up on the care provided and further grow the practice/patient relationship.
- At 31 days delinquent, **submit a written communication** advising the patient of the outstanding balance. This is not a collection notice; it is simply a means of verifying the account balance and performing due diligence to maintain consistent communication.
- At 45 days delinquent, **place another call, or series of calls,** again to ensure the financial obligation is top of mind and that the patient is aware you intend to follow through.
- If the account reaches 60 days delinquent, this is the time to submit a written **final demand.** This notice should inform the patient that they have 10 days to remit payment before the account is formally placed with a third party. If you have performed all the recommended steps prior to this action, you have honored a timely schedule of patient communications and fully informed them of their obligation.
- If this final communication does not generate full remittance, be sure to **follow through** and place the account with a reputable third party at 70 days delinquent. Again, the longer an account ages, the more difficult it will be to collect.

By focusing your internal efforts on the 30-60 day slow-pays, you'll minimize the number of accounts ever requiring collections. But for those that do, how do you choose a third party resource?

Many healthcare professionals avoid working with a third party due to high costs, harsh or alienating tactics, and minimal recovery ratios. But all third party agencies are not created equal. With the advent of new technologies as well as communicative, relationship-based approaches, there are options that are economical, results-oriented and preserve your patient relationships.

By employing a reputable third party agency, you can enlist a staff of experts to support your internal team and supplement your efforts. It's a critical component to optimizing your accounts receivable management and ensuring you have the positive cash flow necessary to maintain a thriving practice.

Third Party Guidelines & Considerations

A third party agency shouldn't simply be a provider; they should be a partner. They should be a resource for managing accounts on a consistent and ongoing basis, as opposed to a necessary fix once delinquencies have accrued. Here are a few important guidelines to consider:

- Employ a **full-service agency.** Letter writing services and attorneys do not use all available means to follow up on delinquent accounts. A full-service agency will utilize both verbal and written contacts, perform skip tracing on invalid addresses, and provide legal counsel when needed to generate the highest possible recovery results.

Continued on Page 20

Continued from page 20

- Seek a third party that **specializes** in collections within the healthcare field. These are the resources that understand the inherent sensitivity required and have successfully implemented non-alienating protocol for other practices. For example, a company that is affiliated with an audit bureau will submit a balance verification notice to start the collection process. This is a simple but critical tactic in performing account pursuit while preserving relations.
- Look for an agency that employs a **fixed fee**. Many can charge upwards of 35% to collect an account which discourages early placement (when results are optimal) and negates your profit margin. While providing the best patient care is your top priority, operating a profitable business is equally important. A fixed fee agency makes collections economical.
- Along that line, work with an agency that promotes **early referral**. In conjunction with your internal efforts, early referral programs help you identify no-pays from slow-pays, so you can treat each accordingly. And the earlier an account is pursued, the greater the chance of full recovery.
- An agency that provides comprehensive services will perform **credit reporting**. Look for an agency that reports to all three major national credit bureaus to affect debtors' credit.
- Ensure that your agency conducts **full reporting of account updates and payments, as well as all communications**. These are your patients and your relationships. You should remain in complete control of your accounts at all times.

Immediate Solutions with Long-Term Benefits

Much like conducting preventative care for your patients, accounts receivable management can benefit from the same ideology. By implementing easy internal procedures that work to *prevent* delinquencies, you can greatly decrease the number requiring additional treatment. It's an approach that can optimize your accounts receivable immediately, and for the long-term.

And because there will always be accounts that require collections, employ the services of a third party agency that subscribes to the guidelines outlined above. Take advantage of the resources available to you. It will help ensure the health of your practice, enabling you to place your focus on the health of your patients.



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Equipment For Sale

For Sale: Dental equipment chairs, units, lights, cabinetry, x-ray, vacuum, compressor, sterilizers and handpieces. Any and all things dental call 843-697-7567.

- Classified advertising is \$35 on a per issue basis. There is no charge for Help Wanted/Job Wanted (Job Bank) ads for members. The public can place ads for \$35 on a per issue basis. Ads are posted to the SCDA website during the month(s) of publication at no additional charge. Please use **no more than 50 words**.
- All ad copies and cancellations must be received no later than the 20th of the month prior to publication, which will occur on the first of the month, with remittances accompanying the ads.
- Job Bank ads can be kept confidential if so desired. If you are interested in receiving information from or submitting information to the Job Bank, please call the SCDA office.
- If you have registered with us previously and have found work or filled your position, please let us know so that we can take your name out of our files.
- Contact: SCDA Bulletin, ATTN: Maie Brunson, 120 Stonemark Lane, Columbia, SC 29210; call 800-327-2598; fax 803-750-1644; email brunsonm@scda.org.

Other News

To keep up with other goings on within the dental profession, just follow the links below:

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[Medicaid Bulletins](#)

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