

Steve Goren
DDS

Anthony Liscio
DDS

Know Now – So You Don't Have to Learn the Hard Way

"I wish that I knew what I know now when I was younger."

This line in the chorus of the musician Rod Stewart's song "Ooo La La" is book-ended by another stanza:

"Poor young grandson, there's nothing I can say.
You'll have to learn, just like me
And that's the hardest way."

Lyrically, "Ooo La La" has nothing to do with dentistry, but the messages of personal reflection and learning through trial and error are certainly salient markers of experience for every dentist — especially those who wish the distance between then and now was not so hefty.

There is, however, one message that was taught to all of us, that will never change and is arguably the key to success for any dentist: A positive and committed relationship with each and every one of your patients.

But in today's competitive dental marketplace, the expenses and efforts required to draw in new patients and keep patient retention rates on the positive side of the ledger has never been more challenging.

Despite the new challenges, the same fundamental truth remains: A strong dentist/patient relationship is not something that is easily broken.

Simply put, the present value of your practice is based on the future worth of the individual patient relationships that you nurture, and the team of professionals you are working with to sustain these relationships.

It is my belief that becoming familiar with the basic metrics of your practice is a sound investment toward maximizing these relationships and meeting your practice and personal goals. Tangible analytic data and other benchmarking information, when tracked over a period of time, can go a long way to helping you know where current opportunity exists within your patient base and where future opportunities and the changing needs of your patients can be maximized. These include:

- New patient visits;
- Active patient counts;
- Patient-specific recall numbers;
- Ratios of procedures done;

- Retention numbers; and
- Treatment acceptance rates.

An analytical strategy can help you take advantage of what you have worked so hard to nurture during your years of practice, whether it's been one year, five years, or 10 years.

As stated in the recently released ODA *Economic Report to the Dental Profession*, there is much optimism going forward for the profession. There exists significant potential for expansion of the market for patient-centric regular care, as well as diagnostic and preventative services when delivered with efficiency.

If the future growth of the dental profession is moving towards an emphasis on preventative and diagnostic services, then be ahead of the curve and know where your practice is positioned. This will allow you to make any adjustments needed to maximize *the now*, by adding even more value to your dentist/patient relationships, and maximize the worth of your practice *in the future*.

In clinical practice, it always begins with taking a proper history and arriving at a diagnosis. So know now what we you might wish you knew then. This will allow you to work through your practice history today, to arrive at a diagnosis and to structure a strategic treatment plan for your success tomorrow. **OD**



Dr. Steve Goren has enjoyed a celebrated career in dentistry for more than 35 years in downtown Toronto. He has represented the dentists of Ontario as the President of the ODA in 2005 and on the Board of the CDA. Dr. Goren may be reached at steve.goren@tierthree.ca.



Dr. Anthony Liscio has enjoyed more than 40 years of a dentistry career. As Chair of the Education Core Committee of the ODA and President of the Toronto Academy of Dentistry, as well as CEO and Chairman of the Board of Western Pacific Trust Company, he has developed a broad business experience few dentists achieve. He may be reached at anthony.liscio@tierthree.ca.