

career | CREATING VALUE

Instruction production

Why oral hygiene instruction deserves its own 30 minutes of fame. by Colleen Rutledge, RDH



Naturally sweetened with Xylitol, Spry Sugar Free Gum from Xlear helps neutralize bad breath and protect teeth between brushing. For more info, visit www.xlearinc.com.



Cadbury Adam's Trident White gum features both a non-abrasive whitening technology, and Recaldent, a remineralizing ingredient that helps strengthen teeth. For more info, visit www.tridentgum.com.

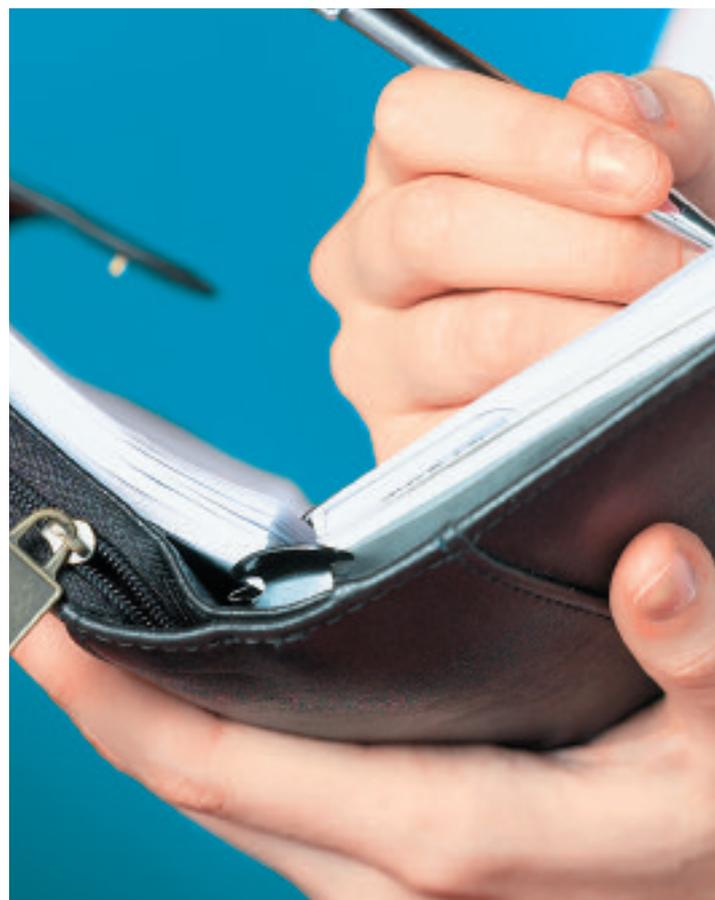
Time is money. I never really appreciated this cliché until I became a business owner.

Most dental hygiene and dental professionals think consultants, speakers and writers make exorbitant amounts of money, but if I were to calculate the hours spent in course development, organizing a consultation, or writing an article, and then divide those hours by the compensation earned, chances are the hourly rate would be surprisingly low. In the beginning of my own consulting business, I was averaging well below minimum wage when I factored in how much time went into developing my material. The fact of the matter is, time is money not only for dental consultants, but also for those dental hygienists putting in chair time for oral hygiene instruction (OHI). The question is, how many dental offices are charging for those hours and expertise?

SELF-LIMITING BELIEFS

Some of you may feel that charging for oral hygiene instruction is just down right greedy. Perhaps you should reassess. If you don't believe that there is *value* in the services rendered, you will convey that feeling to the patient. This is the first and most important hurdle to jump when instituting a fee for OHI.

Ask any dental hygienist how much time is spent delivering oral hygiene instruction on a daily basis. Chances are it is well over an hour each day. Since most practices do not delegate a separate time for OHI, where do hygienists get this time if it is not allotted in the schedule?



In most instances, this time is actually "stolen" in increments during the course of the day while treating the patient, waiting for an exam, or escorting the patient to the front desk. Many hygienists find time to deliver OHI by delaying a trip to the rest room, cutting into their lunch break, or extending their workday. Unscheduled OHI whittles away the time spent on treatment, explaining comprehensive treatment plans, and referrals to the specialist.

THE APPROACH

Some practices truly feel that OHI is an important and valuable service, but are not ready to commit to a separate appointment and fee for this service. These offices will often "bundle" OHI into the hygiene appointment by lengthening the appointment by 10 minutes and increase the fee.

In these situations, it is not likely that the 10 minutes added to the appointment time will be used for OHI. It is also unlikely that the patient will perceive this as a valuable service. A better approach is to designate a separate appointment in the dental hygiene schedule for approximately 30 minutes.

With 2006 coming to a close, now is a great time to set some new professional goals. Why not work with your dental team to help patients recognize the value of a separate oral hygiene instruction appointment. Don't focus on busy schedules and blank stares. Instead, focus on the benefits of one-on-one attention.

You may be thinking: “Patients will balk and insurance companies won’t pay for OHI.” Although the 2005 Common Dental Terminology (CDT 5) does include an insurance code (1330), it does not mean you can rely on every company or plan to pay for this service. My question is: why are we waiting for insurance companies to give us the green light?

Our greatest advantage when establishing value for a revenue-producing OHI appointment is the Surgeon General’s Report, *Oral Healthcare in America*.¹ The report calls all oral healthcare professionals to action stating: “Oral health means more than sound teeth. Oral health is integral to overall health. Furthermore, safe and effective disease prevention measures exist that everyone can adopt to improve oral health and prevent disease.” It’s as simple as that.

PHYSICAL THERAPY FOR YOUR GUMS

Most physical therapists and chiropractors allocate a separate appointment with their patients to instruct them on how to maintain health at home. This one-on-one professional

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session is not squeezed into the last five minutes of an existing appointment, but scheduled appropriately at a separate time. Dental hygienists can follow a similar model when it comes to oral hygiene instruction.

Revenue-producing OHI appointments are not just a matter of circling the ADA code on the transaction slip and handing the patient a toothbrush. It can and should go well beyond that! The following may be discussed during a revenue-producing OHI appointment:

- * Explanation of the oral-systemic link and periodontal disease;
- * Host modulation;
- * Power brush demonstration;
- * Tongue disinfection;
- * Disclosing solution;
- * Bacterial evaluation through a microscope;
- * Proxibrush, end tuft brush, etc.;

- * Rubber tip stimulators, stimulents, etc.;
- * Bridge threaders;
- * Tooth sensitivity issues;
- * Caries control;
- * Food traps;
- * Dry mouth management;
- * Mouth rinse counseling;
- * And, of course, brushing and flossing.

Administering oral hygiene instructions is laden with value, from knowing the latest dental products on the market to sharing your dental hygiene knowledge. OHI is an important and often overlooked service that dental hygienists provide. Why not make the time for it? Remember, time is money! [ml](#)

Colleen Rutledge, RDH is a contributing editor for *Modern Hygienist*.

1. Oral Health in America: A Report of the Surgeon General. May 2000. <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/oralhealth/>.

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Teaching tools

For the skeptics who don't believe there is enough information to fill a 30-minute oral hygiene instruction appointment, consider the following products for as proof that there is plenty to talk about. Every product and every patient is different, and when you go one-on-one to find the perfect match, then those 30 minutes are time well spent.



Colgate Palmolive: Colgate 360°
800-468-6502, www.colgate.com



GSK: Aquafresh Max-Active
800-652-5625, www.aquafresh.com



Sunstar:
GUM Technique Quad-Grip
888-777-3101, www.sunstar.com



Johnson & Johnson:
Reach Fresh & Clean
866-732-2482, www.mrreach.com



Discus Dental: BreathRx
800-471-7747, www.breathrx.com



Johnson & Johnson:
ACT Restoring Mouthwash
800-224-6513, www.actfluoride.com



GSK: Oasis
800-652-5625,
www.dental-professional.com



Tom's of Maine:
Natural Cleansing Mouthwash
800-367-8667, www.tomsofmaine.com



Pfizer: Natural Citrus Listerine
800-223-0182, www.listerine.com



Laclede: Biotène
800-922-5856, www.laclede.com



Procter & Gamble:
Crest Pro-Health Rinse
800-285-9139, www.crest.com



Johnson & Johnson:
Reach Cleanpaste Floss
866-REACH-TB, www.cleanpaste.com



Procter & Gamble:
Oral-B Sensitive Advantage
800-44-ORAL-B, www.oralb.com



Philips: Sonicare Elite e9000
800-676-SONIC,
www.sonicare.com



Procter & Gamble:
Oral-B Triumph
800-44-ORAL-B, www.oralb.com



Church & Dwight: Crest Spinbrush
800-447-6666, www.spinbrush.com



Procter & Gamble:
Crest Pro-Health
800-285-9139, www.crest.com



Church & Dwight:
Arm & Hammer Complete Care
800-524-1328, www.myoralcare.com



Colgate Palmolive: Colgate Total
800-468-6502, www.colgate.com



Xlear: Spry Spearmint
877-599-5327, www.xlearinc.com



Majestic Drug: Sword Floss
800-238-0220,
www.majesticdrug.com



Discus Dental:
BreathRx Tongue Cleaner
800-471-7747, www.breathrx.com



Sunstar: GUM Dual-Action
800-528-8537, www.sunstar.com



Pureline Oral Care:
Professional Tongue Cleaner
877-662-9500, www.purelineoralcare.com

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All valuable ...

Whether you're discussing the best home care plan and products for dry mouth or reviewing interdental options for your flossing flunkies, oral hygiene instruction is a crucial part of empowering patients to not only "maintain" their oral health between appointments, but improve.



Ultradent: Opalpix
800-552-5512, www.ultradent.com



**Sunstar: GUM Dual-End
Snap-Ons Interdental
Cleaning System**
800-528-8537, www.sunstar.com



Thornton: Interdental Cleaners
800-445-3567,
www.thorntonfloss.com



AIT Dental: Proxi-Tip
800-876-4620, www.aitdental.com

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Use **XXX** on card or at www.dentalproducts.net