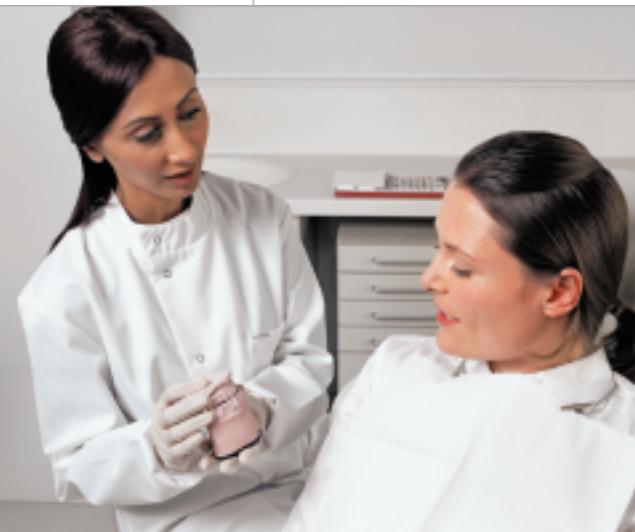


## YOUR STAFF

# Do you need a treatment coordinator?

BY CATHERINE ETTERS



### How this staff member can take your practice to the next level.

which results in increased case acceptance. A good treatment coordinator also provides valuable information about your practice, allowing you to take the pulse in key areas, including case inventory and the real reasons patients are delaying recommended treatment.

### Do you need a treatment coordinator?

Ask yourself the following questions to determine whether you may benefit from adding a treatment coordinator to your practice.

**DO I HAVE OFFICE TECHNOLOGY THAT IS UNUSED, OR NOT BEING UTILIZED TO ITS FULL POTENTIAL?** From using intraoral cameras to harnessing the power of computer software and multimedia patient education programs, a treatment coordinator can develop important skills and help optimize practice efficiency and organization.

**AM I TOO OVERWHELMED TO ADEQUATELY FOLLOW-UP ON OUTSTANDING DENTISTRY?** A treatment coordinator will keep in touch with patients, and will provide reminders, as well as encouragement, to pursue recommended dentistry. Overall, you will improve your case acceptance ratio.

**DO I HAVE DENTAL ASSISTANTS WHO ARE BRIGHT, TALENTED AND WANT MORE?** A treatment coordinator position affords an opportunity for tal-

ented members of your team to grow personally and professionally. If you have staff members who demonstrate leadership, and a caring, professional demeanor with patients, as well as strong organizational skills, and a desire to excel, you may have a good fit for the role of treatment coordinator. Help develop their interpersonal and communication skills, as well as their diagnostic case presentation skills.

**AM I PERFORMING TASKS THAT COULD BE ASSIGNED TO EMPLOYEES?** Delegating responsibilities for patient follow-up and patient education to a treatment coordinator can free up valuable time.

**IS MY FRONT DESK STAFF BOGGED DOWN AND OVERWHELMED?** A treatment coordinator can help lighten the administrative load, thereby eliminating the perceived need for another administrator.

### Responsibilities of the treatment coordinator

Treatment coordinators handle traditional dental assisting duties in addition to responsibilities in several areas:

- Chart review and preparation for daily morning meetings.
- Participate in new patient appointments.
- Enter all treatment plans into the computer or manual system.

**W**hat if you could build employee morale, ensure better patient service and increase production and profitability by making one change in your practice's structure?

Sound too good to be true? It's not.

Welcome to the world of the treatment coordinator. This position enhances nearly every aspect of your practice. Treatment coordinators offer benefits that are tangible and reliable, when the proper fit is achieved between responsibilities and practice needs. The duties of this position vary from practice to practice, but a treatment coordinator's main responsibilities are to educate patients, and to actively participate in treatment planning and presentation and follow-up care. Treatment coordinators also ensure a smooth flow between scheduling and delivery of patient services, and promote patient participation in dental care,

- Support doctor in developing, presenting and following up with patients on proposed treatment plans.
- Educate patients by answering clinical questions, arranging financing, scheduling appointments keeping up with follow-up care and patient satisfaction.
- Provide systematic follow-up with patients who do not schedule treatment, and report back to doctor with reports and organized information on incomplete treatment.
- Handle marketing activities by mailing necessary practice material to new patients, contacting and thanking referrals, providing welcome kits and reviewing prac-

tice and patient expectations with new patients.

- Track monthly goals, and reporting figures at appropriate team meetings.

Treatment coordinators need a reasonable support system to fulfill job responsibilities. A rule of thumb is to have two assistants/treatment coordinators per dentist to meet the demands of the position. Before a treatment coordinator is hired, a system for transitioning new patients into the practice, as well as for scheduling and financing, should be in place. Of course, professional training by an experienced facilitator can help transition the team.

Adding the treatment coordina-

tor position to your practice can reap excellent rewards for you, your staff and your patients. A treatment coordinator's customized and personal approach to care, follow-up, and communication with patients, builds trust and increases patient satisfaction—and retention. ■



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## TECHNICALLY SPEAKING

# Software update

**Programs that can increase your productivity and simplify your life.**

BY JOHN FLUCKE, DDS

The world is full of software. Every time you touch a computer in your operator, office, home or on a plane, you are using software. What a lot of us don't realize is that our choice of software can greatly influence our productivity and uptime.

I spend a good deal of my time tinkering with all types of technology, including tons of software. In this column, I'll go over some programs that I either use on a regular basis or have tried. I hope you'll find some things here that will make your computer use—at home or in your practice—just a little better.

### Photo organizers

If you have a digital camera (and if you don't, what are you waiting for?) you're probably accumulating quite a few photos on your hard drive. This, of course, leads to a problem of trying to keep track of all those pictures.

In my office, I use EagleSoft's Advanced Imaging package to keep all of my patient images organized in the digital chart. However, at home I don't have that luxury. My personal digital photo collection is currently over 16GB and growing rapidly. At that rate it is incredibly difficult to keep track of all the pictures.

Whether you want to just browse your photos with friends and family or completely organize them by

keywords in your practice, there are a couple of programs that can help keep that ever-growing photo collection under control. They're called ThumbsPlus and ACDSee. Both have a Windows Explorer look and feel, and both display folders in the left-hand page.

Clicking on a folder that contains pictures or any type of graphic files will create thumbnail images of your images and files in the right-hand pane. Thumbnails are small pictures of the original and allow you to easily see what the photo looks like without actually opening it. By simply clicking on a folder, all graphic images in it are displayed as thumbnails. You can then double-click any of the images to see them full screen.

However, there are differences between the two programs, and I'll deal with each software separately.

### ThumbsPlus

This is one of the best-known image organizer programs on the market. It takes a few seconds to load, but once it is running it is a powerful piece of software. It contains a powerful database tool that allows you to associate keywords with individual pictures.

This function allows you to associate a word like "birthday" with a photo, and then later you can search for the word "birthday" and every photo with that word in its title will be displayed. This functionality really helps you find the right pic-

tures. Multiple keywords can be used so you can organize and find just the right photos—for example, 'Billy's birthday.'

ThumbsPlus also has a batch rename function, which allows changing the names of multiple files as well as a batch convert function that allows converting from one file format to another. The program is available as a download from [www.cerious.com](http://www.cerious.com).

ACDSee is the thumbnail program that's very popular with users of professional-grade cameras. Perhaps its greatest advantage is its extensive support for RAW image formats. RAW images are large

## ThumbsPlus is one of the best-known image organizers on the market.

unprocessed and uncompressed files. The file size is frequently two to six times larger than a normal picture taken with a digital camera. High-end photographers love this as it gives them much more image data to enhance and change. ACDSee does this quickly and easily for almost every camera on the market. Download it from [www.acdsee.com](http://www.acdsee.com)

Both ThumbsPlus and ACDSee have a huge number of features, and both are available for a free-trial download. Take a look at each and see which better suits your needs.

### Desktop search tools

Last fall I bought a new Hewlett-Packard (HP) laptop. My old Dell was getting beat up and I needed more hard drive space (don't we all). One of the things that attracted

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