‘Patient education needs to be woven into the daily activities within a practice’

My Dental Hub, www.mydentalhub.com, is a premier web-based dental patient education software. Accessible via computer or mobile device, including the iPad, it provides patients with informative material on major areas in dentistry, including 3-D animations. Patients are then empowered to make educated decisions about the proposed treatment. Dental Tribune spoke to My Dental Hub Director Dr. Reena Gajjar about the idea behind and the benefits of the software.

How did the idea for My Dental Hub evolve?

My Dental Hub started back in 1996, when I joined my husband’s prosthodontic practice. Having a background in computer graphics, I developed printable educational materials using images and simple explanations for our practice. These were used exclusively during patient consultations. It soon became apparent that the treatment plan acceptance rate was increasing dramatically with these materials. My husband, Dr. Ken Hebel, began employing these materials and experienced the same response. Patients asking about treatment options were presented with the printable materials to review and take home. We both found that in addition to enhanced case acceptance, this material was a referral driver.

This digital educational tool, facilitation of patient comprehension and acceptance of proposed treatment manifested in a software program, was originally called Click & Print, which contained printable forms and a few animations that demonstrated dental procedures.

Click & Print was sold on a disk for several years. Four years ago, we started to notice a shift in the way that companies were doing business, becoming cloud based, and we made the investment to convert our disk-based product to a web-based product. The development took over a year, but the investment proved to be a smart decision because we emerged as My Dental Hub, the first cloud-based patient education and practice-marketing solution.

As a cloud-based company, we have ‘Patient education needs to be woven into the daily activities within a practice’
the ability to constantly upgrade and update our product offering and customize our solutions to the needs of our clients. As the dental industry starts moving toward cloud-based solutions, we are well positioned to offer solutions to meet the needs of the individual dental practice, as well as the collaborative needs of dental organizations.

Convincing patients to invest in dental treatment, e.g., an implant treatment, is a challenging task. How does My Dental Hub help? We believe that there are three primary components to case acceptance. Patients will invest in dental treatment if they understand the problem and understand the treatment that is being offered, but more importantly, patients must understand the value of the treatment and how that treatment will improve the quality of their life — whether it is related to improving function or esthetics. The content in My Dental Hub has been specifically developed to address these components of patient education in a language that patients will understand. The 3-D animations are used to visually explain the procedure and the benefits of the treatment, and the printable and “e-mailable” documents serve as reinforcement of the animations and as a resource for patients to review at home.

What are some of the additional features the software offers? One of the key features of the software is the ability to e-mail the animations and documents to patients. This allows the dental practice to extend its consultation from the office into the patient’s home, where patients can share and discuss the recommended treatment with those involved in the decision-making process.

My Dental Hub has several modules within the program. We offer animations, image documents, narrated slide shows, customizable text documents, a document creator, a patient and photo management section allowing the practice to upload and store patient images, as well as a presentation-creation module. Our newest module, Easy Consult, has been extremely popular and is currently our most used module. Easy Consult allows the busy practice to do a consultation in three simple steps and then e-mail the entire consultation to their patients. It automates the consultation process. It’s very simple and highly effective!

My Dental Hub also offers mobile applications, apps, available on iPad, iPhone and Android tablets, containing all our animations and slide shows. The iPad app is extremely popular in dental practices as an easy way to explain treatment to patients. It provides an exceptional presentation on oral-hygiene instruction, which invariably is a significant driver in any dental practice.

In addition, we offer a product called Web Site Content that allows users to place any of our animations and slideshows on their websites or link to their website. High-quality animations on a website allow patients to obtain information about the procedures offered by the practice and offer a powerful branding and marketing tool for a practice.

In your opinion, what are the most common mistakes dentists make in patient education and/or marketing their dental practice? There are two types of marketing that dental practices should do, internal and external. Internal marketing includes posters, brochures, discussions, etc., delivered within the facility. External marketing includes websites, advertising, mailings, etc., that are done virally through e-mail or regular mail. Many dentists are not trained in marketing and find it inherently difficult to embrace marketing to grow their business. Many do not know how; many just don’t think they need to.

Many dentists do not take the time to educate their patients or understand the value of patient education. Many feel that patients will accept treatment on the sole basis that the dentist told them they need it. That may have been the way it was, but we now live in an information-based society, and if patients do not receive adequate information from their dentist, they will seek it elsewhere. Hopefully, that won’t be the competitor down the street!

We did a survey of our My Dental Hub clients to determine if there was increased case acceptance of 53 percent. The number indicates the importance of educating patients and the impact it has in any business, including the business of dentistry.

The process of patient education needs to be woven into the daily activities within a practice. This requires enhanced staff training and implementation. Many dentists do not invest the time to integrate the process into their practice procedures. Acceptance of a practice philosophy mandates that training for implementation is as important as training in the procedure.

In your opinion, how will digital tools change the dental practice and the way in which doctors communicate with their patients? The entire world is digital; it’s not “becoming” digital. Dentists must embrace this new means of doing business simply because it is now a component of everything, from paying a bill in a restaurant to travel, shopping and doing something as basic as reading.

In terms of communication, digital tools enable a dental practice to communicate quickly, easily and effectively with patients or referrals. No more printing, no more mailing, diminished expense and waste.

Society is changing. People are more aware of their environment and doing their part to go “green.” With simple tools, a dental practice can deliver high-quality education directly and exemplify “environmental friendliness” as well. Ten years ago, if you had told people you could e-mail animations to patients to show them a dental procedure, no one would have believed it possible. Today, this is the way of the world and the way business is being done.

I believe that with the incorporation of digital tools into a dental practice, “elegant simplicity and seamless connectivity” with patients and colleagues will become the standard. Those who embrace today’s technology will be tomorrow’s industry leaders.