**Why improving your practice is a mystery – part 1**

Jacqui Goss says: don’t forget to stop and smell the roses

As a practice management consultant I have a range of daily rates depending on what I’m asked to do – consulting, training, mentoring, an audit, patient coordination and so on. Compared to some others in this business, my rates are modest and clients have even told me this. This allows more practices to be able to afford me, which broadens my experience, and means I’m quite often asked to stand in for an absent team member or members. Not clinical staff but practice managers, business development managers and patient coordinators, for example. In doing this, I sometimes ‘hold the fort’ at reception while somebody is on lunch break or has a hospital appointment etc.

**Fresh eyes**

I enjoy doing so and in this article I shall explain why you should facilitate and take part in job swaps within your practice as well as occasionally bringing in outsiders to look at roles with a ‘fresh pair of eyes’. We’ve moved on from the days of ‘time and motion’ studies but similar principles still apply – somebody new to a task can often suggest more efficient ways to do it. There are other good reasons why you should take a turn on the reception desk, why your practice manager should sit in (with the patient’s agreement) on a treatment and why your nurses should see how some of the monthly management reports are run off and analysed.

I can’t recall their names just now but some bosses of large retail companies are well known for rarely being in their offices. Instead, they are constantly touring their shops, often turning up unannounced. They monitor activity, talk to shoppers, meet their staff and generally keep abreast of what’s happening. Such an approach is impossible within dental practices. For maximal turnover dentists and hygienists need to be ensconced in their treatment rooms from dawn until dusk and only let out at weekends if they’re lucky! The practice manager is rarely seen as they bat-