

# THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL ASPECTS REGARDING EFFICIENT ORGANIZATION AND FUNCTIONING OF THE DENTAL OFFICES

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**Abstract:** The efficient organization and functioning of a dental office in Romania depends on several factors, of which the most important are represented by the medical team professionalism on the one hand, but also by the ability of the medical facility administrator to manage the resources of the cabinet calmly and efficiently. Thus, in this paper, we tried to bring attention to several theoretical and practical aspects, some seemingly harmless, but also insignificant for dental practitioners, which may lead to an increase in the efficiency of the organization and functioning of dental practices in Romania.

## INTRODUCTION

Generally, the efficient organization and functioning of a dental office, whether it is a cabinet in an urban area or a dental practice in a rural area, involves not just a series of administrative responsibilities, but also a multitude of daily decisions, which allows a strong and very effective development of everything that, can be defined as "professional opportunities". In our case, such participation strengthens and enhances the role of the dentist in the day-to-day work of the dental office both as a manager and as a practitioner. It should also be mentioned the role of the medical assistant in the proper activity development of a dental office.(1-6)

Specifically, there are many dental clinics in Romania, small units with one or at most two dental units, with a medium and/or even reduced patient flow, in which the dental practitioners prefer to work alone, without the help of a medical assistant (according to the Classification of Occupation in Romania, or shortly the COR, we have two types of medical assistant who can perform activity in a dental office together with the dental practitioner: dental assistant and dental prophylactic assistant).(1-7) This is because the dentists, for economic reasons, prefer to carry on this extremely laborious medical activity on their own. These practitioners are understandable because they want to effectively reduce the costs (staff and supplies) of this small business, but from a practical point of view this is a big drawback in the organization and efficient operation of a dental office, from several points of view, which we will show in stages throughout this material.(7-17)

Thus, the aim of this article is represented by the highlighting and especially arguing some theoretical and practical aspects regarding the organization and efficient functioning of a dental office in Romania.

First of all, we would like to highlight an extremely important thing, namely that the efficient organization and functioning of a dental office is in fact a managerial activity [the management of an activity can be defined as "organization, administration and directing professional practice in a way that facilitates the quality of patient health care (in this case, the

patient performs the role of the client), the efficient use of working time, as well as the medical staff, reducing the medical team members and patient stress, improving the professional and personal satisfaction of the team, and also increasing financial profit".(1-6)

In the same time, as mentioned before, the efficient organization and functioning of a dental office in Romania implies the presence, in this type of health unit of a medical team, a team consisting of a dentist and dental medical assistant (dental assistant, dental prophylactic assistant; in addition, it would be ideal for this medical assistant to possess or acquire in time medical competence in radiology, as more and more dental offices have opted for these imaging services directly at the dental unit).(1-6) Although there is no legal obligation in Romania for the employment of auxiliary medical staff such as dental assistant, it is very difficult to effectively carry out such a profession without the dentist benefiting from qualified help. For this reason, it is necessary to clarify the term "team concept", a concept that basically guides the interaction and interdependence of the whole team in the dental office to promote the unity and efficiency of the group.(1-6,8-17) In the case of a small dental office, the medical team consists of the dentist and the dental assistant, to which the dental technician is added, and in the case of a bigger dental office with more than 2 work units, the medical team will be composed by dentists, dental assistants (and, where appropriate, we also discuss of dental assistants with medical competence in radiology, when the radiology service is provided within the dental office), receptionists, dental technicians etc. Each member of the team must accept their responsibilities. Thus, staff management includes daily communication and also regular meetings, which underlie the organization and efficient operation of a dental office, regardless the country and/or region where it operates.(1-6,8-17)

In addition, an effective customer management (in fact, of the patient) is added, a concept that is based on the idea that the patient (client) is perceived as the most important person for the dental care team. Customer (patients) policies are set to ensure the expectations of clients.(1-6)

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For the smooth running of activities in a dental office, there must also be a very well-established policy of data records (record management): Patient treatment records are a valuable document of oral dental care, actually a "written testimony" of events and conversations, during each meeting. We actually discuss of written records (dental and periodontal records, anamnesis, informed consent and refusal of the patient, succession of dental treatment etc.), as well as unwritten records (photographs, radiographs, study models etc.).(1-6)

There are more frequent situations when clinical case is presented within medical team. Presenting the case is actually the process of explaining to the patient, after consultation, his situation and the treatment plan. But, and the dental assistant, depending on the situation, may be responsible for such a case presentation.(1-6)

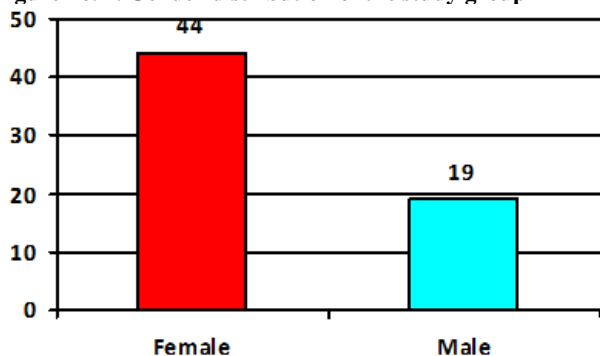
In order to finalize this explanation of the most important theoretical and practical aspects that underlie the efficient organization and functioning of a dental office in Romania, we will also briefly refer to what in the literature is known as "time management". Time management is essential to the success of any activity. The appointment book is the mechanism for controlling appointments, meal breaks, meetings between team members, free days of staff, holidays, professional conferences etc. Patient medical follow-up and marketing should not be forgotten, as a basic element in the efficient organization and functioning of a dental office not only in Romania, but anywhere in the world.(1-6)

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

Starting not only from the above-mentioned notions, but also from our experience, the authors, both as dental office managers and dental practitioners, we have developed a very succinct questionnaire, which includes a number of 10 points regarding what efficient organization and functioning of a dental office in Romania means.

This questionnaire was applied between November and December 2018 to 63 subjects, dentists from Bucharest, and aged 38 to 60, all subjects working in the private offices and having a practical experience in this specialty, for at least 10 years. The sex distribution of subjects involved in the study was as follows: 44 of the subjects (representing 69,84%) were females, while 19 of the subjects (representing 30,16%) were males (figure no. 1).

**Figure no. 1. Gender distribution of the study group**



Next, we present the questionnaire applied to the group of subjects involved in the study:

### Questionnaire

1. For an efficient organization and functioning of a dental office, organizing, managing and directing professional practice requires? a) Facilitating the quality of patient care improvement; b) Facilitate the economy of consumables needed for specialized therapeutic maneuver; c) The ultimate goal is to

achieve the highest financial benefits as a result of the therapeutic maneuver.

**Correct answer: a.**

2. The term of "team concept" in dental practice basically guides the interaction and interdependence of the whole team in the dental office to: a) Produce a most favourable impression on the patient; b) To promote the unity and efficiency of the group; c) Achieve a wide and valuable specialized casuistic.

**Correct answer: b.**

3. The roles of the dental team (dental practitioner, dental assistant, dental technician - where applicable) consist of: a) Assessment of dental practitioner's professional activity after completion of specialized treatment for each patient in work; b) Participation in the formulation of targets and objectives; c) Sharing information; d) Applying, evaluating and reviewing plans; e) Encourage the participation of all members of the medical team in activities that will result in an efficient organization and functioning of the dental office.

**Correct answers: b, c, d, e.**

4. Staff management includes daily communication and also regular meetings. Staff meetings provide opportunities for: a) Revising the organization's goals; b) Assessing the achieved progress; c) Sharing of information and wishes; d) Together solving problems; e) Analysis of the financial accounting state.

**Correct answers: a, b, c, d.**

5. The written and unwritten records of the dental office serve the following purposes: a) Organizing source of collected data; b) Assessment tool, which helps diagnose and treatment plan; c) Recording of general health and illness of the patient's oral cavity; d) Means of communication for patient education and change of his behaviour; d) A guide to consistent and effective care; e) Evidence of the need for treatment and forensic documentation, for defence and protection of the medical team when needed; f) Means of indictment of medical team members in case of malpractice mistakes involving and accusing the entire medical team.

**Correct answers: a, b, c, d, e.**

6. The basics in the actual order of a complete case presentation given to the patient by the dentist, includes the following steps: a) Information; b) Education; c) Treatment options and their costs; d) Choosing medical treatment; e) Patient agreement and motivation; f) Disagreement (non-adhesion); g) Any criticism on other dental practitioners, where the patient has been for specialist consultations?

**Correct answers: a, b, c, d, e, f.**

7. "Patient motivation" means an efficient presentation of the case, essential in patient's accepting of the treatment plan, and this is best achieved if the provided information satisfies human needs and coincides with the patient's beliefs, values, culture and attitudes. The strategies used by the dentist to motivate the patient are: a) The information provided must be relevant and useful; b) To promote learning, reward and success must be used; c) In order to promote learning, criticism or punishment must be used; d) The information provided should take into account the patient's experience and knowledge.

**Correct answers: a, b, d.**

8. Disagreement or non-adhesion is the patient's lack of cooperation, refusal to do so, as regards the oro-dental health care that the dental medical team applies to him. This disagreement may be manifested by: a) Frequent delays in appointments or early departure; b) Increased patient fear, manifested by frequent questions addressed to the medical team; c) Not presenting for treatment; d) Patient refusal to perform

## CLINICAL ASPECTS

the necessary diagnostic tests (e.g. dental x-rays); e) Failure to comply with prescribed medication and medical team recommendations on oral hygiene; f) Refusal to accept the recommended specific procedures or specialty treatment plan suggested by the medical team.

**Correct answers: a, c, d, e, f.**

9. For the efficient organization and functioning of a dental office, it is necessary to use the computer in the current activity of the medical unit, for: a) Data management (input, storage, sorting, and correction); b) Creating a good impression on patients; c) Integrated software, programming, communication and education.

**Correct answers: a, c.**

10. Efficient time management is essential for the success of any activity in dentistry, the programming notebook being the mechanism for controlling all the activities of the dentist (or dentists) in that public health care unit. The systems used for patient programming are: a) Future schedules for unlimited time; b) Schedules limited over a specified period of time; c) Phone contact records; d) Fast scheduling, the same day or at most the day before, depending on the availability of the dental practitioner.

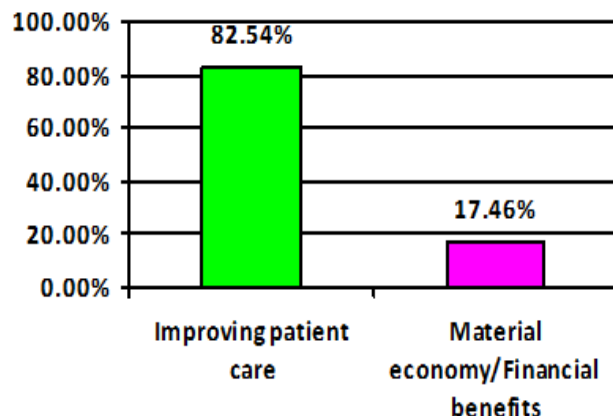
**Correct answers: a, b, c.**

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

After the evaluation of the answers from the questionnaire, the following aspects emerged:

At the first point of the questionnaire related to the efficient organization and functioning of a dental office, only 52 doctors (representing 82,54%) responded correctly (variant a.) while the remaining 11 practitioners (representing 17,46%) have responded wrongly (variant b or variant c) (figure no. 2).

**Figure no. 2. The objectives of the efficient organization and functioning of the dental office (a. Improving patient care b. Material economy c. Financial benefits)**

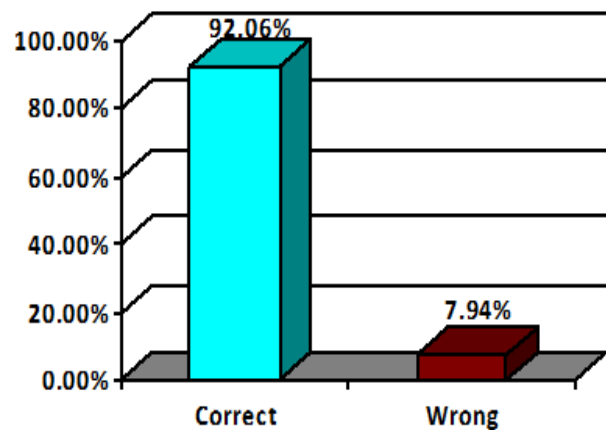


Concerning the “team concept” in the practice of dental medicine 58 (representing 92,06%) of the subjects chose the correct answer and only 5 subjects (representing 7,94%) chose the wrong variants (figure no. 3).

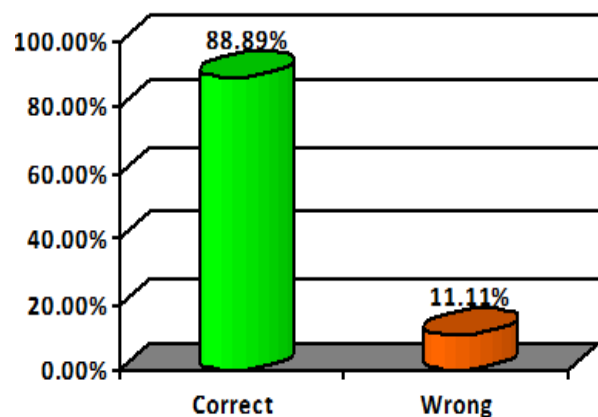
Regarding the role of the dental team consisting of dental practitioner, dental nurse and dental technician, only 7 of the subjects (representing 11,11%) responded wrongly, while the majority (56 subjects representing 88,89%) responded correctly (figure no. 4).

About the opportunities created by staff meetings within the management program of medical facilities all doctors involved in the study showed an essential involvement in the units operating and as proof they all answered this question correctly.

**Figure no. 3. Appreciation of the “team concept” among the study group**

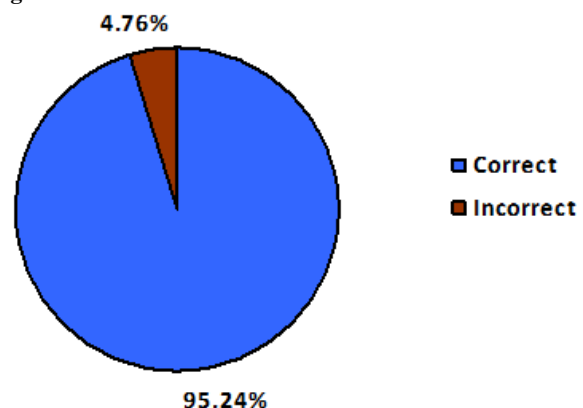


**Figure no. 4. The role of the dental team**



The fifth point of the questionnaire related to the data stored in the dental office also shows the involvement of the subjects in the good course of medical activity, most of them (60 of the subjects representing 95,24%) gave the correct answers and only 3 subjects (representing 4,76%) responded incorrectly (figure no. 5).

**Figure no. 5. Use of data stored at the dental office**



Another question that shows the good training of doctors included in the study is the sixth question about the basics of a complete case presentation given to the patient by the dentist. To this question all the subjects offered the correct answers.

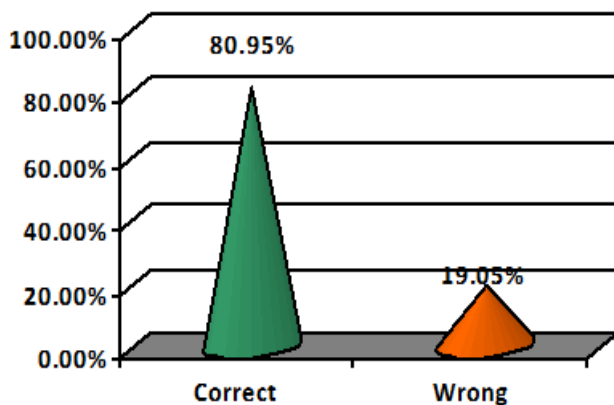
In terms of strategies used to motivate patients, most

## CLINICAL ASPECTS

doctors in the study, 51 - representing 80,95%, gave the correct answers while the remaining 12 doctors (representing 19,05%) responded wrongly (figure no. 6).

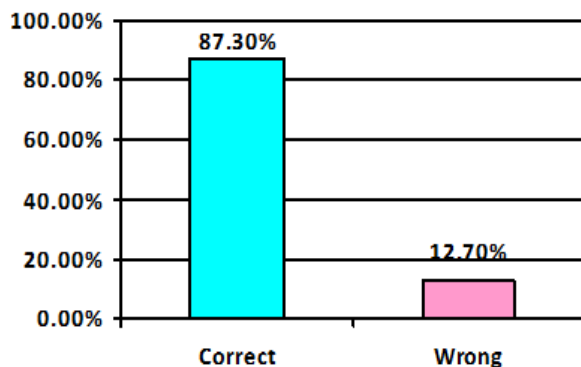
Other situations that reflect the activity of physicians in dental offices are those described in paragraphs 8 and 9 of the questionnaire related to disagreement or non-adhesion of the patient, respectively the use of computer in the current work of the medical unit. For both questions all the doctors included in the study gave the correct answers.

**Figure no. 6. Strategies used to motivate the patient**



The last question of the study, related to systems used to patient programming only 8 of the subjects (representing 12,70%) gave the wrong answers while the majority of 55 subjects (representing 87,30%) gave the correct answers (figure no. 7).

**Figure no. 7. Systems used for patient programming**



### CONCLUSIONS

Following the analysis of the answers to the 10 questions, the following can be concluded:

Organizing, managing, and directing professional practice in the dental office should help improve the quality of patient care.

The "team concept" in dental practice guides the interaction and interdependence of the entire team in the dental office in order to promote the unity and efficiency of the group.

The roles of the dental team were very clearly defined and consisted of: participation in setting aims and objectives; sharing information; implementation, evaluation and review of plans; encouraging the participation of all members of the medical team in activities that will result in an efficient organization and functioning of the specialized medical office.

The written and unwritten records of the dental office serve the following purposes: a source of organization of the

collected data, as well as an assessment tool that helps diagnose and treatment plan; recording general health and illness of the patient's oral cavity, as well as a means of communicating for patient education and changing the behaviour of the patient; a guide for consistent and effective care; proof of the need for treatment and forensic documentation, defence and protection of the medical team when needed.

Presentation of the patient's case by the dentist should include the following steps: information, education, treatment options and costs, treatment choices, patient consent and motivation, disagreement of the spouse (when applicable).

Time management in a dental office is essential for an efficient organization and functioning of this type of public health unit not only in Romanian, but also in other countries of the world.

Most dentists included in the study have a solid knowledge of the proper and efficient organization and functioning of a dental office in Romania.

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