



Business Management

CREST ORAL-B
PRESENTS
**“THE PATH TO A
PREVENTIVE PRACTICE”**

Dr. Roger Levin

As a dental professional, you care about your patients, but getting them to make oral health a priority can be a challenge. Many patients aren't aware of the important connection between good oral health and overall health. By adopting a preventive philosophy you can help your patients achieve better oral health and also help your practice grow.

Dr. Roger Levin, a key industry leader, author and lecturer, has made it his personal goal to “improve the lives of dentists and promote quality of patient care.” Whatever your type of practice, Dr. Levin has advice to help you on ‘The Path to a Preventive Practice’.

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WELCOME

Hi, I'm Dr. Roger Levin, Chief Executive Officer of Levin Group, a dental management consulting firm. What I'd like to talk to you about today is the Path to the Preventive Practice. We are witnessing an incredible evolution in dentistry moving from a mainly Restorative Model to also the inclusion of a Preventive Model. A preventive dental model or preventive philosophy for a practice means that we are creating a new segment to add to the practice in terms of patient education and services. The amazing thing about a preventive model is that patients will raise their level of appreciation and understanding, while returning to the practice on a regular basis and referring other people.

RESTORATIVE MODEL EVOLVING TO PREVENTIVE MODEL

Advantages of a Preventive Model

- **Raise patients' appreciation of oral health**
- **Encourage regular visits**
- **Increase referrals**

Now what happens when you develop a preventive model is that it is important for every patient to consistently understand what prevention is all about, how it works, and even what products have to be used (products such as floss, toothpaste, toothbrushes, and gradually even powered brushes.) The preventive model is one that can be incorporated quickly into any dental practice, but has a tremendous impact on the life of that patient in regard to dental health.

INVOLVE THE ENTIRE TEAM

- **Discuss how a preventive model works**
- **Advantages to the practice**
- **Importance of follow through**

Now we need to talk about some of the key skills that are needed to run a preventive practice. The first step is having the entire team understanding how a preventive model works. A great deal of this will depend on the scheduling person bringing the patient back on a regular basis; but at the same time our hygienists and our assistants are absolutely critical in terms of patient education, following the steps that are laid out in terms of the preventive model and preventive health, and product recommendations. We need to be specific about this. What are we going to tell

these patients for education, what products are we going to recommend? It's important because patients who do not know what products to go buy often leave the practice and don't follow through. So even if we bring the patient back every six months in our preventive model, if they don't follow through in between in terms of oral home care we really will not get the results that we are looking for.

CONTINUED TRAINING

- **Training is critical**
- **Establish a recall mechanism**
- **Create better patient experiences**

In order to accomplish this the team is going to need a certain level of training. Front desk people are going to need to understand exactly what's necessary from a recall standpoint with the patient coming every six months. My suggestion would be that you re-appoint them six months in advance with a series of reminders, such as a postcard or letter, and a phone call to remind the patient to come in. Along with that, the hygienist and assistants are going to need to work with the patient so that they understand that regular visits to the practice will prevent dental problems, be over time a much better process for dental health and create a much better dental experience for both adults, as parents, and their children. So this is a real change that we're beginning to see in how we can help patients better in terms of oral health, but at the same time have a better attitude about dentistry and prevention and taking care of themselves.

COMMUNICATING WITH PATIENTS

- **Enhance communication skills**
- **Use a protocol or script**
- **Set aside time to communicate**

Now, one of the major aspects of this is communicating with patients, and in order to communicate with the patient we need to think about a standard protocol or even a script that would allow us to explain to every patient on a regular basis, why prevention is important, and how to go about making it happen. This is probably the dental assistant or dental hygienist speaking to the patient and making sure that every patient is presented with this information both as a new patient and gradually over time when they are in the practice.

How do you improve communication skills? One of the best ways is to leave a few minutes in each patient visit to talk about prevention, to talk about the products they should use, ask them if they have any questions. We shouldn't assume the patients know exactly what to do, even if we've told them before. So a great opportunity is to look at the mouth, have the appointment, assess the level of oral home care and at the same time ask the patient if they need any more help, if they have any questions, and be sure to repeat the training and the names of the products that you want them to use. We are in a new world today. Powered brushes are making a tremendous difference helping adults do a much better job with oral home care, their oral health, and have better dental visits.

GROWING THE PRACTICE

- **Prevention creates happy patients who refer**
- **Prevention adds a new service**
- **Prevention does not diminish Restorative work**
- **Preventive and Restorative care work synergistically**

Now how will prevention grow over time in terms of helping the practice? And the answer is that the more frequently we have patients returning to the practice on a regular basis, the better job we can do in terms of practice productivity, patient communication, and then what grows practices- referrals- happy patients tell other people about your practice, and to create a happy patient, and even though you are appreciated when having your treatment, a happy patient is a patient that does not have a problem and does not need restorative dentistry. So, over time, happy patients who come for prevention tell others because they've had a better experience. It's much more fun going to a dental hygiene appointment than going for restorative dentistry. But I want you to understand that in no way will this diminish the amount of restorative dentistry over time. In fact, by having the preventive patient come regularly, you are much more likely to pick up problems earlier and do a better job and an easier job for your patients.

What about practice income? How will prevention affect that? The answer is that prevention will add a significant new service in a sense to the

practice. When we help patients with regular hygiene appointments, hygiene instruction, explain the products they need to use, and have them coming in regularly, we will have a significant increase in practice productivity from patients returning on a regular basis. So nobody has to worry that we are going to see a decrease in restorative care at the expense of prevention. These two areas work together synergistically to help build the practice and give the best quality of care for every patient.

FIVE TIPS FOR THE PATH TO A PREVENTIVE PRACTICE

Well, based on that what I'd like to do is give you something very practical to think about. So, I'm going to give you FIVE (5) TIPS you can take back to your office and start building your preventive program right away.

#1: Patient Education

- **Write a script**
- **Determine which products to recommend for home use**

The FIRST one is patient education. This is part of the system. We want to educate every patient about why prevention is important and how it works. I suggest you sit down and actually write a script that will help the team understand the key points you want to make. For example, we want patients to come every six months. For example, we want them to use certain products. We want them to floss. We want them to brush their teeth. What type of floss do we want them to use? What toothpaste should they have? Should they be using a manual brush or a powered brush? These are all questions.

And by the way, think about yourself. What do you use and what do we recommend some of that to our own patients? We want them to be as interested in preventive health as we are as dental professionals.

#2: Prevention

- **Start immediately**
- **Monitor results**

NUMBER TWO (2) is prevention. Put the preventive program in place and monitor it. Let's check and see how our patients are doing. What

do they look like six months later. Many patients don't follow all the recommendations for oral home care. And many patients also follow the home care, but at the same time they don't get the same results because they're not doing it properly. So again, as I said earlier, think of this as an evolution, and an evolution means that we gradually add education and knowledge and skills to help the patient over time become better and better at prevention. There's no question that a healthier mouth means a healthier life. And patients will appreciate this. They will tell others. They will bring their families. They will refer.

#3: Service Mix

- **Emphasize additional service**
- **Assess increased productivity**

NUMBER THREE (3) is the service mix. Once in awhile some are concerned that if I add a preventive portion to my practice I will lose something else. But nothing could be further from the truth. The reality is that when you add the preventive practice, all you are doing is bringing in an entirely new area of service into the practice, allowing the practice to focus on excellent quality of care, helping people, but at the same time – and this is important – increasing production to the practice, allowing the practice to be healthy financially, so it can invest in a great team, education, a wonderful facility, and continue to help patients.

#4: Communication

- **Identify 3 key points**
- **Reinforce in writing**
- **Listen for feedback**
- **Question to ensure understanding**

The FOURTH one is communication. There's no business, hospital or health care business office on the planet that doesn't need to think about how we communicate, because our job is not just treating. Our job is also relating to our patients, motivating them, educating them. And in order to do that we need to think about our communication skills. My quick suggestion today is that you have key points that you want to make for each patient. In fact, I suggest THREE KEY POINTS. What are three key points about a powered brush do you want to tell the patient, and then give them the

name of what they should purchase in writing, or floss, or toothpaste, or an oral health care rinse? The second part to communication is listening, answering questions, and then asking the patient if they have any questions. They don't always understand us. Sometimes they nod their heads, but the truth is that really they didn't understand us, and we find that out through the questions. If someone comes back at six months and is not getting the result that we want, what a great time to ask them, "What are you doing? Tell me how you are handling this. What order are you using the recommended products in? These are the key questions to ask.

#5: Customer Service

- **Make patients feel good in the office**
- **Emphasize Oral Health as part of Total Health**
- **Acknowledge referrals**

And FINALLY, NUMBER FIVE (5) is customer service. Dentistry really is about service. Certainly we are about treatment, and now we're about prevention. But within all that we are also about customer service, helping the patient feel good in our office, wanting to come to us, to not be afraid, and have a strong desire to have a healthy mouth. We know we want a healthy heart. We know we need our knees to work. We know we don't like to have bad shoulders. We need to get the mouth, the teeth, and the infrastructure of the mouth into the same category of importance as the rest of the body. And we do that by helping people focus on prevention, fixing anything that is wrong, and taking them all the way through, as to exactly what to do, how to do it, what products to use. If we follow this program your practice will grow, your patients will have better quality of care, your referrals will go up. And the best part is doctor and staff satisfaction go up, because nothing is better (as one dentist to another) than helping people to be healthier, to feel good about themselves, and I don't think there is much in the world that is more impressive and exciting than a beautiful smile from a happy patient.

INCREASED PATIENT SATISFACTION LEADS TO IMPROVED TEAM SATISFACTION

I thank you very much for spending this time with me, because we are all now on the path to a preventive practice.