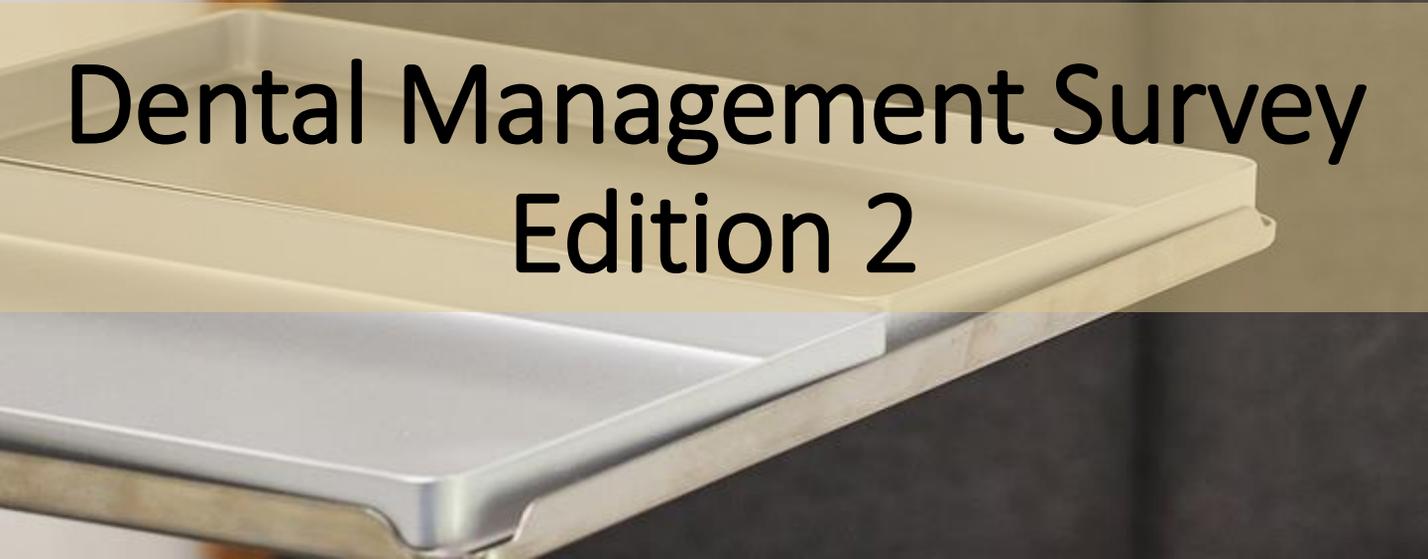




**Dental Management Survey
Edition 2**



Dental practitioners keen to use technology to develop their practice

The first dental college in India was set up in Kolkata in 1920. The first private dental college was set up in 1965 and I had the opportunity to study at that hallowed institution. Today the Manipal College of Dental Surgery (MCODS) is a top ranked private dental college in India. While dental education is focused on how to treat patients, very few institutions educate their students on how to set up and run their dental practices successfully. In current times, where healthcare models are undergoing a paradigm shift, the dental practice has no option but to join this journey. However, many dentists feel handicapped by their lack of knowledge in this area. I was no different and learnt on the job to figure out how to make decisions that could ensure my practice remained relevant to patients.

The second edition of our dental management survey is an effort to help dentists understand how better to seize the opportunities they have today and grow their practice. Our findings indicate that recently qualified dentists as well as established dentists struggle with running their practices efficiently. This calls for a relook at some of the key management principles being employed by dentists in India.

Technology plays an important part of our lives today and a dental practice that doesn't adopt technology is unlikely to remain relevant. In this regard, our survey indicates that dentists are slowly adopting social media as well as desktop based technology for practice management and patient outreach, while continuing to remain reliant on paper based records.

Our team also spoke to some dentists to understand their key priorities and increasing patient flow and continuing dental education featured high on the list. Dentists are keen to increase the size of their practice, build a brand and raise awareness about dental hygiene among patients. To do so, they feel the need to learn about new procedures such as implants so they can serve patients better. Interesting India has a dental surgeon to patient ratio that favors dentists. According to the WHO the ideal dentist to population ratio is 1:7500. According to the [World Health Statistics](#), 2014, the ratio in India is 1:10000 in urban areas and 1: 1.5 Lakh in rural areas.

While dentists in India continue to work through these challenges, their counterparts in the west have been adopting these principles for some time. The Middle East, for example, has been adopting digital technology in healthcare for a while now. In Kuwait all patients have unique medical record numbers and identifiers help the health ministry to keep track of key health parameters including dental parameters. India is also moving in that direction with the government introducing digitization in all spheres of life.

I hope this report will help dentists make better decisions in their journey to grow and manage their practice. As always, I look forward to your feedback and support.

Dr. Vikram Venkateswaran

Founder and Managing Editor, Healthcare in India

Profile of respondents



Close to 60% of respondents had less than five years of experience; 30% had between 5 and 10 years of experience and the rest had over 15 years of experience



71% were private practitioners and the rest were practicing as part of a dental chain or hospital



Key findings

Do you use management and technology tools?



The tools most commonly used by dental practitioners were



42%
Dental Management software



42%
Microsoft Excel



39%
Practo

Tools on top of the mind recall of dental practitioners were



96%



86%

practo 75%

What do dental practitioners use technology for?



36%
Patient education



28%
Appointment management



26%
Storing dental images and X-Rays

Over 78% of respondents felt technology could be used to market their clinic and its facilities to patients, particularly international patients (49%) and to collaborate with fellow dental practitioners (51%).



Close to 62% of respondents want to partner with third parties to use technology to improve their practice.

Leveraging digital tools to grow your dental practice

3 Considerations

#1 Where to deploy tools? – For marketing or cost optimization efforts?

The answer depends on the primary business objectives for the practice. For most new and emerging practices, the focus should be on gaining patients. Growing revenues, investing in improving patient targeting, patient education and branding become key objectives. At this stage, our recommendation is for most dental surgeons to look at tactics like Digital Marketing, Social Media and platforms like Practo. While the platforms can be chosen based on the target patients' social media presence, the messaging also needs to be tailored to patients. This is where we have often seen a disconnect.

For the purpose of this survey, we analyzed over 2000 social media conversations (available publicly) among dentists in the Pune region over 6 months and found that a majority of conversations were happening on Facebook. While this is understandable considering many patients are active on Facebook, the challenge lay in what was being discussed. The topics were centered on continuing dental education and implants, with only a handful of conversations around topics like improving dental hygiene and maintaining dental health, which are more relevant to patients. Predictably, there was very little patient engagement.

For established practices looking to deploy technology, the focus needs to be on improving operational efficiencies. We believe that larger more established practices can benefit from a Customer Relationship Management software such as Sugar CRM, Zoho CRM or Creato CRM. These platforms can help record and analyze daily transactions and over time, the data can be used to rationalize the practice's portfolio. This could help identify profitable areas which the dentist can choose to channel investments in. In our experience, we have seen dentists focus on mature offerings such as removable partial dentures, which while providing stability in revenues, may leave little scope for future growth.



2 Paid tools versus free tools

One of the most interesting aspects of marketing in the digital world is the usage of tools. Today small and medium sized medical practices have access to cloud based tools, that help them manage their brand on the digital space. While most doctors tend to start off with the free tools, I have often been asked what are the key considerations to move from free tools to paid ones. Now in my opinion, these are the three key criteria to move

- 1) Patient Base Maturity- If the patient base is digitally savvy, then it is worth considering moving from free to paid tools. When I say digitally savvy I mean if you are a pedodontist practicing in an urban area then it is safe to estimate that your patient base which is essentially kids and their parents are digitally savvy and it would make sense investing in paid tools.
- 2) Volume of content / Frequency of posting- If you have a mechanism to create relevant content constantly and if it is being posted daily then it make sense consider moving from a free tool to a paid tool. The other thing to consider here is the availability of the content in various formats, videos, infographics, text, images etc
- 3) Investments in Marketing- While a digitally savvy patient base and tons of relevant content to share are [precursors, it would also be important to make investments in the marketing space. So if you have already invested in training your staff to work with these tools then it makes sense upgrading from free to paid tools. Otherwise you might make the most of your investment in these channels. So it important to either train some of your staff on marketing or to hire marketing people to help you run these tools to make the best out of them.

3 Evaluating tools - When do you need to change?

The other question I have been often asked is around the effectiveness of various online tools. How does on measure the effectiveness of your online tools. There are a couple of criteria

- 1) Growth in Influence- One of the best measurement criteria's is if these tools are helping you grow your influence in the dental field. Are you being recognized as a credible source of information in the area around which you have shared content. Klout score is a way to understand if your influence has grown and you should keep a constant watch on the same.
- 2) Developing Patient Personas- Are you able to gain insights from your own patient database. Are you able to identify your top patients and does the tool help your develop personas that help you understand the stated and unstated needs from your key patients.
- 3) Growth in the practice – We use tools to help us grow the practice. If the investments are not helping us grow by almost 20% in value and almost 5-10% in volume over and above what we would have received from organic growth. If your tool investment is not creating an exponential growth for your practice then it is time to revisit the investment.

Indian Dental Association: Taking Dental Management to the next level

The Indian Dental Association is the main body governing the practice of dentistry in India. The Indian Dental Association (IDA) is an authoritative, independent and recognized voice of dental professionals in India. They are committed to public oral health, ethics, science, and advancement of dental professionals through its initiatives in advocacy, education, research and development of standards.

The vision of the IDA is “Optimal National Oral Care for All “ by 2020 and in accordance with the vision, the IDA has launched many public Dental health programs.

In addition to the IDA has been working on improving the adoption of management principles and technology among the dental professionals in India. In the 2016 report, we had mentioned how the IDA has been working on improving and educating other dental professionals on the use of social media. This has helped to such an extent today that almost 90% of dental practices surveyed have a Facebook page.

The IDA uses conferences, exhibitions, classroom sessions and webinars to educate members and dental professionals to adopt management practices. One of the programs for example is the “Overall Excellence Classroom programme”. The program looks at key areas, like Practice Management, Applicable Laws in Practice, Records Management, Medico-Legal Aspects of the Practice, Finance, Marketing, PR, and Operations. The course also teaches soft skills to the dentists along with how they should handle stress and tips on nutrition.

More than 50,000 dentists are members of IDA and it has more than 300 branches across the country.



About Healthcare in India

Healthcare India inspires organisations to build solutions and products that improve healthcare standards and patient care in India. Healthcare India publishes in-depth analysis, research papers, articles and interviews with doctors, care providers, healthcare leaders, government officials and technologists.

Healthcare India has been consistently rated among the top 100 global platforms on healthcare. The platform was founded in 2010 by doctor turned technologist Dr Vikram Venkateswaran.

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