

Internet Resources for the New Dentist

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First of all, I would like to welcome you as a recent colleague to the dental profession. Whatever your situation might be right now, your perspective on almost everything has changed through your graduation and licensure. Only about 5% of you will be moving directly into becoming a solo practitioner. However, 100% of you have entered the amazing new world of dentistry with electronic resources at your fingertips. You will now, and for the rest of your career, make important decisions for and with your patients, your colleagues, your staff, and yourself. The Internet can play a very profound role as an information resource for the future of your “family.”

If you wish to have a vital, dynamic, and thriving practice, Internet resources can be a critical tool for your success. It is unquestionable that effectively using and relying on many instantly available information resources will aid in developing and maintaining the highest quality practice with well-educated patients and staff. For those practices that are not using the Internet, their patients and almost the entire world are leaving them behind. A Google search for “dental internet resources” yielded 29.6 million results. You will want



Figure 1—The Crest Dental ResourceNet (www.dentalcare.com) offers you and your staff, after a simple registration, access to up to 160 hours of free CE with new courses routinely added.

to concentrate on some main areas: professional networking, educational tools, and practice management tools. This article will give you a glimpse of my perspective on Internet resources for the new practitioner. Some basic Web sites for these resources are listed in **Table 1**.

Professional Networking

When considering the myriad of professional networking opportunities on the Internet, it must first be understood that one of our professional obligations is to be a member of organized dentistry and to interact with the dental community continually contributing to the profession. In the United States, that obligation essentially means continuing your American Dental Association (ADA, www.ada.org) membership and your Academy of General Dentistry

(AGD, www.agd.org) membership, or joining them if you are not currently a member. You can go online and join or update your information. While there, take a new look at the many resources for new dentists—you will have a new perspective, even if you have seen most of it before. You should take advantage of the opportunity to network with the profession at the local, state, and national levels. Many state dental associations, such as the Florida Dental Association and the Hawaii Dental Association, as well as many AGD constituents have new dentist or mentor programs that serve to connect and help you along the next few steps of your new profession. Remember, it won't be long until you will be helping another new graduate who may have been right behind you in school.

Other professional networking opportunities on the Internet are available for free or by paid subscription. Reality (www.realityesthetics.com), the Internet Dental Forum (www.internetdentalforum.org), Clinical Research Associates (www.cranews.com), and Dental blogs.com (www.dentalblogs.com) are just a few. You can ask questions and get responses almost instantly, but be sure to use all of your educational skills to evaluate the information for clinical guidance. Expect the number of bulletin boards, blogs, podcasts, and vodcasts to continue to grow as technology becomes less expensive and far easier than ever before. In fact, it may be hard to stay a step ahead of the resources available in grade-school classrooms.

Educational Tools

Another area of Internet resources is educational tools. This area is also continually growing and deserves attention. It includes continuing education (CE), patient education, dental literature, new product information, and medical and drug information.

Continuing Education

A Google search for “internet dental CE” yielded more than 5 million results. These included a variety of courses using text with images, various streaming videos and videos on demand, audio and PowerPoint or Flash slides, and even live electronic classrooms and interactive Web casts. Many Web sites offering CE provide a free sample to help you decide how to spend your money. A “free dental CE” search resulted in 3.6 million results, but that is misleading.

You will need to decide which sites are useful to you and your practice. The Crest Dental ResourceNet (DRN, www.dentalcare.com), The Procter & Gamble Company, Cincinnati, Ohio offers you and your staff, after a simple registration, access to up to 160 hours free CE (Figure 1) with new courses routinely added for which you can opt in to receive e-mail notification. Most courses are text with images, but some have video, such as Dr. Gerlach’s course on

whitening (Figure 2). Dental CE Anywhere offers a number of courses that can be accessed with your phone or personal digital assistant (PDA). It is likely that you won’t be carrying a laptop all the time, so look for this form of CE to expand as Internet, television, and phone services converge and become readily available to hand-held devices.

The ADA Web site affords you a wealth of information, including infection control, Occupational Safety and Health Administration



Figure 2—An example of an archived video lecture on the Crest Dental ResourceNet.

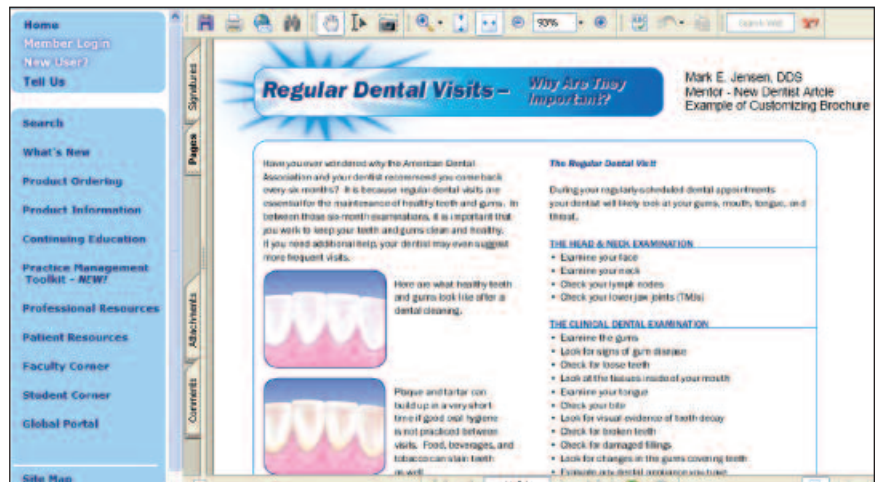


Figure 3—An example of a patient education brochure available at the Crest Dental ResourceNet.

(OSHA), Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) regulations, and office resources. For subscribers, *The Journal of the American Dental Association* also is available online. CE credits can be obtained from ADA CE Online, a new program that should have 50 courses available by the 2006 ADA Scientific Session. Don't forget the brochures and resources that you can purchase online from the ADA.

Patient Education

Patient education resources on the Internet can be an invaluable aid. Some materials are available only after signing a contract, but many options are available at no cost. On www.dentalcare.com, patient education brochures are available to review on your monitor (Figure 3). Then you can print or e-mail them to patients. The brochures are available in 17 languages, which is particularly valuable for those practices in

multilingual communities. For a personal touch, the brochures can be easily customized with a few key-strokes. These types of resources can be useful to concisely and accurately answer patient questions. You or your staff also may want to use online videos to help explain the mechanisms of action of new products, such as Crest Pro-Health toothpaste and Crest Whitestrips (The Procter & Gamble Company).

Dental Literature

As a student, you undoubtedly became somewhat of an expert in accessing literature on the Internet through PubMed (www.pubmed.gov) and other search engines. You can refine your search to articles that used an evidence-based dentistry approach through the EviDents search engine (<http://medinformatics.uthscsa.edu/EviDents>). Some manufacturers provide a database of published clinical and technical data on their products (Figure 4) with links to articles or abstracts.

Through PubMed, free abstracts are available for many articles, and some journals provide free access to entire manuscripts. One of these journals, *The Journal of Contemporary Dental Practice* (www.thejcdp.com), offers bimonthly article notification, via e-mail, so that this resource for clinical dentistry is available on your monitor soon after it is published. The online journal is searchable and contains articles on a wide variety of topics including Internet resources, evidence-based dentistry, and HIPAA. Table 2 lists examples of articles available at *The Journal of Contemporary Dental Practice* Web site.



Figure 4—An example of a manufacturer's database of published clinical and technical data on a product.



Figure 5—The Practice Management Toolkit provides informational aids and resources that may help in the day-to-day operations of managing the many business aspects of a dental practice.

Practice Management Education

Dentalcare.com also has a relatively new and growing resource, the Practice Management Toolkit (Figure 5), which provides informational aids and resources that may help in the day-to-day operations of managing the many business aspects of a dental practice. In my opinion, all available resources are worth examining to see if they will be useful for your business situation.

Practice Management Tools

One of the most important, and probably the most dynamic, areas of Internet information for dentistry is practice management. The amount and depth of information taught about practice management varies widely between dental schools, but it never quite seems real until after you have graduated. You are now in a different relationship with staff, and if you are a practice owner, you have effectively become the CEO, CFO, and CIO all at once. Internet resources for practice management also can vary widely from free reading materials to costly sessions online with consultants.

Online Software Tools

Some computer software can work with online resources to help you manage inventory and order supplies and equipment. Online accounts help keep track of your regular patterns and help plan for efficient management of clinical supplies. Patient oral hygiene supplies and samples can be ordered online from many companies. On Dentalcare.com, free samples can be ordered and periodic special offers make good financial sense. Special

premiums also may be available for participating in online programs.

Online Communication

Another practice management

resource available on the Internet is electronic work authorizations for some dental laboratories. You also can e-mail images for shade selection and communication or video-

Table 1—Internet Resources

Professional Networking	Web site
American Dental Association (ADA)	www.ada.org
Academy of General Dentistry (AGD)	www.agd.org
Dentalblogs.com	www.dentalblogs.com
A Comprehensive List of Dentistry and Dental Health Chat Rooms on IRC and the Internet	www.chatmag.com/topics/health/dental.html
Internet Dental Forum	www.internetdentalforum.org
Educational Tools	Web site
Dental ResourceNet	www.dentalcare.com
Private Dental Network	www.pdnet.tv
<i>The Journal of Contemporary Dental Practice</i>	www.thejcdp.com
<i>Compendium of Continuing Education in Dentistry</i>	http://compendiumlive.com
PubMed	www.pubmed.gov
EviDents	medinformatics.uthscca.edu/EviDents
Google Scholar	www.scholar.google.com
Internet Dentistry Resources	www.spallek.com/IDR
Dental Products Report	www.dentalproducts.net
National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research	www.nidcr.nih.gov
Practice Management Tools	Web site
Dental ResourceNet Practice Management Toolkit	www.dentalcare.com/pmkt/pmkt_index.htm
SureBook	www.surebook.com
JulySoft	www.julysoft.com
Dental Enhancements	www.dentalenhancements.com
CDE Online	www.cdeonline.org/clinical/youroffice.htm#menus
4Expertise's Dental Manuals—Standard Operating Procedures	www.dentalsops.com
Dental-Consults	www.dental-consults.com
Benco Dental	www.benco.com
Patterson Dental	www.pattersondental.com
Colgate Oral Care Center	www.colgateoralcare.com

conference with the laboratory. Patients also can videoconference with the specialists to whom you referred them. MS Messenger with video, Skype, or various other videoconferencing and file sharing resources are available. NEA FastAttach is a convenient electronic system that eliminates sending paper forms and radiographs to insurance companies that participate. This Web site can be found at www.nea-fast.com. It also allows providers to share images and information with each other to help with referrals to specialists who also participate. Eventually, there may be an online electronic patient record system that would allow health and dental history information to be easily shared and updated while being accessible from any Internet connection. You may even

use these with selective patients for postoperative follow-up or discussions regarding their treatment. Nothing replaces the personal aspects of working face-to-face, but these tools have made the world a lot smaller and more time efficient, allowing more personal contact time at appointments.

Patient Communication

Many new patients will visit your Web site before they call to discuss your services, making your Web site a valuable resource for patients to learn about your office, staff, and procedures. Many patients prefer e-mail communication for appointment reminders and questions. E-mail also can be effective for sending patients birthday and anniversary greetings as well as educational brochures in an

electronic form. Finally, don't forget to consider the options for offering online billing and payments from your secure Web site.

Practice management software is its own topic that is not within the scope of this article. However, in my opinion, it is invaluable to be able to access it anywhere, including from your phone if a patient calls with a problem.

Conclusion

Internet resources for the new dentist are almost unlimited. Valuable information related to dentistry continues to evolve and expand every day. In dental school, you are educated on how to use these resources, but after you graduate and are licensed, they take on new meaning and have practical applications. This article has barely touched the surface of how this information can be applied on a daily basis and will continue to be available to you and your patients literally at your finger tips.

Because I am an older dentist, I am confident that your education has prepared you to take advantage of these new resources and how to use them to provide better and higher quality dental patient care.

Welcome to the professional world of Internet resources. If you are not already permanently connected to this vast sea of information, you will be forced to do so by your tech-savvy patients and the ever-changing electronic world. Remember that your patients also have access to much of the information that you will be applying, so we all need to work together to meet our contract with society as a dental profession in so many ways. ■

Table 2—Examples of Articles Available at The Journal of Contemporary Dental Practice Web site

Guest GF. Internet resources for dentistry: government and medical sites for the dental profession. <i>J Contemp Dent Pract.</i> Feb 2000;1:75-88.
Guest GF. Internet resources for dentistry: computer, Internet, reference, and sites for enhancing personal productivity of the dental professional. <i>J Contemp Dent Pract.</i> Aug 2000;1:60-75.
Guest GF. Internet resources for dentistry: utilization of the Internet to support professional growth, decision making, and patient care. <i>J Contemp Dent Pract.</i> Nov 1999;1:31-35.
Forrest JL, Miller SA. Evidence-based decision making in action: part 1—finding the best clinical evidence. <i>J Contemp Dent Pract.</i> Aug 2002;3:10-26.
Forrest JL, Miller SA. Evidence-based decision making in action: part 2—evaluating and applying the clinical evidence. <i>J Contemp Dent Pract.</i> Feb 2003;4:42-52.
Chasteen JE, Murphy G, Forrey A, et. al. The Health Insurance Portability & Accountability Act: Practice of Dentistry in the United States: Privacy and Confidentiality. <i>J Contemp Dent Pract.</i> 2003 Feb;(4)1:059-070.
Chasteen JE, Murphy G, Forrey A, Heid D. The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act and the practice of dentistry in the United States: electronic transactions. <i>J Contemp Dent Pract.</i> Nov 2003;4:108-120.
Chasteen JE, Murphy G, Forrey A, Heid D. The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act and the practice of dentistry in the United States: system security. <i>J Contemp Dent Pract.</i> Aug 2004;5:158-167.