

# 8 SIMPLE SECRETS TO BEING INDISPENSABLE IN THE DENTAL PRACTICE – PART 3



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In the last two issues of Oral Hygiene, we revealed the introduction to this topic, Secret #1 and #2. If you missed them, be sure to look back at these articles!

## SECRET #3: SPECIALIZE.

By specializing, you are setting yourself up to be “Indispensable in the Dental Practice!” You are setting yourself up to be the expert in a particular field or to be known as “that” dental hygienist everyone looks up to, making you stand out from many.

You will be amazed at the opportunities that can come from specializing!

## THE ONE WHO MAKES EVERYONE SMILE!

In one of the practices where I worked, I was referred to as the “Happy Hygienist” as I was always happy. I smiled a lot and was super friendly.

I stood out in that practice! When people referred to me, they would say, “Oh, the Happy Hygienist.”

Sounds silly, but when you think about it, people want to be around

happy, positive people. So when someone was feeling down, they would spend time with me. Patients liked to see me because I made them feel good and delivered a positive experience. If you are known as the “Happy Dental Hygienist,” people will want to be around you. They will seek you out because you make them feel good.

Also, by being a happy, positive person, people tend to want to do what you do. Happy people profoundly impact those around them and can also be excellent influencers. So, when it came to contributing ideas to make change happen in the practice, it often went in my favour because people respected my view and input.

Happiness is contagious, and when people see others around them happy, they are more likely to adopt positive behaviours and attitudes. I also love being super lovely to grumpy or mean people to see what happens!

Happy people are generally more optimistic, kind, and empathetic and more likely to have healthy rela-

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tionships, be more productive, and have a more positive outlook on life. Being happy and a positive influence will contribute to your overall success of being indispensable in the dental practice!

### **HAWKEYE.**

In another office where I practised, I was named Hawkeye. This is because I was so good at detecting caries under restorations and crowns.

Nothing seemed to pass me! I was also good at letting the patients know what I had discovered, would then confirm with the dentist, and by that time, the patients were ready to schedule their restorative appointment.

The office referred to me as Hawkeye. I kept this dentist very busy!

### **IMPLEMENTING SYSTEMS FOR EFFICIENCIES AND COST EFFECTIVENESS.**

I worked in a practice that was overspending on supplies. I implemented systems to help them be more efficient and cost-effective. It became a passion of mine, and I was on a mission to help this office. I saved them a lot of money and other resources. They were sad to see me go when I had to leave because of my husband's work!

### **GO DEEP ON SUBJECTS.**

#### **a. Oral-Systemic Connection**

Go deep into the Oral-Systemic Connection. Be aware of the "red flags" during your assessment and refer your patients accordingly. Then, not only will you be the hero by saving people's lives, but you will also be known as the Oral-Systemic Specialist that everyone comes to with questions.

#### **b. Oral Cancer Screening**

If you are a veteran dental hygienist

like me, you know what we learned many years ago to screen for oral cancer has changed dramatically. Dive deep into the screening process and attend a hands-on experiential workshop. Then, take your new skills and knowledge back to your practice and save lives. Be known as "that" dental hygienist passionate about early detection.

#### **c. Microbiological Testing**

Why are we not testing for oral pathogens?

Many studies and evidence show that periodontal pathogens are directly linked to systemic disease. So why are dental offices not testing their patients' oral bacteria?

Testing for pathogens is in our area of influence, yet less than 10% of Canadian dental offices are implementing microbiological testing. This is disconcerting and doesn't make sense.

Is it because testing wasn't introduced in dental school?

It is a service that not only can help save our patients' lives but also a service that practices can use to help increase case acceptance for Non-Surgical Periodontal Therapy (NSPT) and help with marketing to make your practice stand out from the crowd. Could you dive into microbiological testing and bring this much-needed testing into your dental practice?

We regularly get tested with pap tests, mammograms, colonoscopies, etc. We should address the harmful pathogens in the oral cavity that are directly connected to many systemic diseases. If we don't offer these tests, who will?

OraVital, for instance, is a comprehensive system which provides the most accurate diagnosis and most

effective treatment of oral infections that cause periodontal disease, halitosis, peri-implantitis, and oral-systemic diseases.

Could you be known as "that" dental hygienist who offers bacterial testing? When you dive deep into this subject and understand the importance of testing, providing optimal treatment, and attaining optimal outcomes, you will be indispensable in the dental practice.

I know dental hygienists who had implemented this system in their op when the office did not want to implement it. I think this is fabulous, and it wasn't long before the entire office was on board.

Microbiological testing is a game changer. When we look at the pathogens that our patients present with and provide the best treatment and medicaments for them, we are getting them healthy while helping them feel great, saving lives and generating referrals and a loyal patient base.

#### **d. Oral Health Essentials Program**

I played a role in creating this program through Crest & Oral B. For example, I helped create a tear-away sheet that the dental hygienist can give their patient to demonstrate any trouble areas, their current state of health or disease, and recommendations for treatment and home care. I used to create my template, photocopy it, and give it to my patients at the end of their appointment to show this information so they could take it home with them. This tear-away, along with many other educational tools, is all part of the Oral Health Essentials program.

We designed this program for your patients to be on the entire Crest & Oral B system. It is about handing them the kit, which

includes the iO power brush, stannous fluoride, CPC rinse and interdental aids, so they walk out of your practice equipped with the tools you are recommending that will help them get healthy! Unfortunately, did you know that only 7% of your patients will go to the store and buy what you suggest?

The studies are there to confirm that the system works in improving oral health. It is time to see the results for yourself. This is another game changer. If you want to avoid having inventory in your practice, you can always reach out to your Crest & Oral B rep and be a part of another delivery system.

#### **e. Oral Probiotics**

Could you specialize in oral probiotics? Lorraine Gambacourt did, and guess what? She is now known as an Oral Probiotics Specialist. Since specializing in oral probiotics, she has helped many dental practices across the country implement oral probiotics in their practice, has become a presenter and a writer for blogs and journals, and contributed a chapter in a book called *Get Your Spit Together*, all on this topic. Finally, she narrowed down her interest and specialization.

We all know the importance of probiotics for the gut. In addition, probiotics for the mouth help flourish the good bacteria while keeping the bad at bay. This is because it works so well with NSPT.

Think about how many lives you can impact – those who suffer from halitosis or periodontal disease. You can also help build up patients' immune systems before travelling. So, dive deep and specialize in oral probiotics.

#### **f. Sleep Apnea Protocol**

Learning about sleep apnea should get any dental hygienist passionate about bringing awareness to this potentially fatal disorder. Sleep apnea can lead to many diseases

and conditions, such as obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, increased cholesterol levels, and systemic inflammation. In addition, it can affect brain function, mood, and behaviour, to name a few.

Did you know that reported cases for obstructive sleep apnea range from 4–9% in the adult population; however, 70–90% of patients are undiagnosed?<sup>1</sup> If you don't have a protocol for assessing potential sleep apnea with your patients, it is time to make a change and not only improve lives but also save lives. Look into how you can lead a sleep apnea protocol in your practice.

#### **g. Laser Therapy**

Have you received your laser training? We need to have theory along with hands-on training. Could you specialize in lasers?

Beth Parkes, who leads the *rdhu* laser training program across Canada, was known as “Laser Girl” in her office. She wore her cape with pride!

Elevate patient care and expand the services and treatment your practice can provide. Become trained in the soft-tissue diode laser and specialize!

#### **h. Orthodontics**

Could you be that dental hygienist trained in ortho so you can start using these skills in your practice? This will help you with your assessment and communication with patients, and if you are providing ortho in your practice, it will allow you to participate in this field.

#### **i. Myofunctional Therapy**

Once you understand what to look for in your patients, you can begin to collaborate with many other healthcare providers to improve

the quality and longevity of your patients' lives.

Go one step further and become a myofunctional therapist. We offer this practical program through *rdhu* with Joe Siegfried, RDH and Myofunctional Therapist. It is a hybrid program that offers online and hands-on/experiential applications.

#### **j. Policies and Procedures**

Taking on the role of the dental hygienist, who takes on the responsibilities of being current with policies and procedures regarding your college (including IPAC), takes work. Still, it sure makes you indispensable in the dental practice!

Could you be the one to take the lead in creating and updating all manuals, policies, and procedures as needed?


#### **k. Social Media and/or Website**

Do you possess a hidden talent for creating reels?

Do you take great pictures? Set up a day and take updated photos of your team to put on your website. Take before and after pics of your patients and share them with education to bring awareness to your followers.

Create a plan to get more followers! You could also create your practice's YouTube Channel, provide great content, and guide your patients for more educational resources.

The possibilities are endless! I have many more. What could you specialize in to become indispensable in the dental practice?

Stay tuned for the following Secrets in the upcoming editions of Oral Hygiene! You can also reach out to me on Instagram @kathbok, @rdhuinc or my email kathleen@rdhu.ca. 

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## **References**

1. Obstructive Sleep Apnea Knowledge: Attitudes and screening practices of Minnesota dental hygienists; J Dent Hyg. 2019 Jun; 98(3): 29-36