

The rise in “wants” ... but are we neglecting the “needs”

While we are told that the cost of living, in particular, our monthly food costs, should begin to subside by the end of the year, it's a really important issue that we should be addressing with our patients.

Many of the practices I work with report the cost of living has had no impact on patients accepting or, indeed, seeking out treatments. What I have seen is that many practices that have patients who “want” treatment, such as ortho, or other elective solutions to improve their smile, are thriving, and preventative care, such as examinations and hygiene visits that are a “need” are, in some practices, dropping off a little.

I wouldn't go so far to say it's a trend, more of an observation I've made from visiting and working with a variety of practices up and down the UK, so I'm guessing that this just isn't just happening in the practices I support.

It goes without saying (although, yes I'm obviously saying it) that to pursue these “want” treatments, the patients need to have good oral health before treatment proceeds, but what about the monthly recall percentages for patients to attend their examination and hygiene visits?

In my experience, the practices with the higher recall percentages are those that have hit the nail on the head with conveying the importance of preventative care and mouth-friendly lifestyles to their patients. Patients have been educated by the clinicians, hygienists, front-of-house team and, of course, via the practice's other communications, such as marketing,

patient newsletters, and other contact points systems they have integrated into their workflows.

Here are a few suggestions on how we should be helping our patients prioritise their Oral Health and help the patients with the “need” to stay healthy and not avoid preventative care:

- Encourage Preventive Care:** communicate that to delay addressing dental issues, will lead to worsening oral health conditions. Untreated dental conditions will ultimately be more costly. Patients avoiding their examinations may be worrying about incurring treatment costs. Talk to your patients about a range of options, and how you can help them access affordable care.
- Oral Hygiene Products:** The cost of living can also impact patients' ability to purchase oral hygiene products, such as toothpaste, toothbrushes, and dental floss. Higher living costs can make it challenging for some individuals to allocate their budget for these essential items, potentially leading to inadequate oral hygiene practices and increased risk of dental issues. Sundry sales should be reviewed. They can often be sourced in bulk, allowing us to pass these savings on to our patients. In some practices, I'm seeing the incentive of free toothbrushes to encourage attendance. This is a small price to pay for many practices, and your patients will really appreciate the support.
- Dietary Choices:** The cost of living can influence individuals' dietary choices, potentially affecting their oral health. In



regions where healthier food options are more expensive, individuals may opt for cheaper, processed foods that are often high in sugars and detrimental to dental health. Limited access to fresh fruits and vegetables can also impact overall nutrition, which is essential for maintaining good oral health. Create educational blogs, advice, videos, leaflets – anything to help patients make good decisions for their oral health and stay within their monthly food budgets.

- Stress and Mental Health:** The cost of living can contribute to financial stress and overall mental health concerns. Stress has been linked to poor oral health habits, such as teeth grinding (bruxism) and neglecting oral hygiene routines. Additionally, high levels of stress can weaken the immune system, making individuals more susceptible to oral infections and

gum diseases. Again, educate your patients on how we can help.

It is crucial for dental professionals to be aware of these cost-related challenges and work with patients to find solutions, such as discussing flexible payment options, providing education on preventative care, and exploring resources for financial assistance programmes or insurance coverage.

It's fantastic that we are able to provide treatment for our “want” patients but let's make sure we are helping those “need” patients who may be putting off their routine care. ■

About the author
Lisa Bainham
is President at
ADAM and practice
management coach at
Practice Management
Matters.



BADN at The Dentistry Show

Unfortunately, I couldn't be at The Dentistry Show – the first time I have missed a major dental show in 31 years! – as I was in hospital overnight, being observed. An interesting experience...

Many thanks to Shirley and Adam from the BADN office, who manned the BADN stand and the BADN dental nurse lounge, as well as BADN Chairman Joan Hatchard, who stepped in to chair the Dental Nurse Forum at short notice, and BADN members Jo Dawson, Rebecca Silver and Preetee Hylton, who responded to my plea on Facebook for volunteers to assist Adam and Shirley on the stand.

This show was the debut of our brand new BADN stand backdrop and banners to give our stands at future shows a bit of pizzazz.

Meanwhile, the Dental Nurse Forum featured a wide range of presentations, from dental reform in Wales to diabetes and gum health, via the menopause, domestic abuse, and various personal development topics – as well as the GDC's contribution on CPD.

BADN will also be at the London Dentistry Show at ExCel on 6 and 7 October 2023 – come along and say hello!



Shirley (seated left) and Adam (right) on BADN's stand



BADN Chairman Joan Hatchard with speakers Dr Amber Qureshi and Brittany Pittham



Resignations

Last month, BADN announced that the current President, who had taken up the role last November, had stepped down. “The BADN Executive Committee fully supports Debra's decision,” said BADN Chairman Joan Hatchard LCGI FBADN. “The duties of the President will, for the time being, be carried out by members of the Executive Committee and the Panel of Representatives, assisted by the Chief Executive and the BADN head office staff. BADN remains fully committed to supporting the UK's dental nurses and the dental nursing profession.”

A week later, the Chief Dental Officer, England also stepped down from her role. BADN, as the UK's professional association for dental nurses, would like to thank Sara Hurley for her support – both of BADN and the dental nursing profession – during her term as Chief Dental Officer, England, and would like to take this opportunity to wish her all the best for the future. ■

About the author
Pam Swain is Chief
Executive of the
BADN

