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Exclusively to Clients and Friends
of Advanced Practice Management

BULLETIN



DENTAL DOW 2025 Wrap-Up

In 2025 the mature area practices sampled showed **Production** was up **3%** and **Collections** were up **2.6%**. Exams (patient flow) were up 1.9%. New patients were up 2.6%.

Bill Rossi In 2024 Production was up 6% and Collections were up 5.5%.

When You Factor in Fee Increases, Inflation and Collection Percentage, What is the Outcome?

According to our database we found that since 2007, dental fees have doubled – up 100%. At the same time, The C.P.I. was up 83%. So, fees went up faster than inflation. But, at the same time, the collection percentage for this Metro area sample went from 93% to 77%. This was due to increased PPO participation and write offs. So, in effect, the collection percentage went down faster than fees went up. If things kept up exactly, the actual collection percentage would have been 85%.

So, dentists' pricing power has decreased over the years. Due to the slippage in collection percentage, patients that pay the full fee are in effect, subsidizing the patients, employers and insurance companies with PPOs.

Doctors, please keep in mind that you have more power than you think. Almost every doctor I've ever talked to about the issue says, "Well, in MY practice Dental insurance is very important. If I left insurance, I'd probably lose everybody." We've seen over and over again that patients are more loyal than you think and if you handle a transition well, it can work well.

Our recently completed survey showed that 16% of dentists plan to drop a PPO in the coming year. 25% said they dropped a PPO in 2025. Doctors, if you are collecting less than 75% and haven't looked into this, now might be a good time. We help more dentists across the country with this issue than anyone else. Just call Bill (952-921-3360), email (Bill@advancedpracticemanagement.com) or schedule a 30 minute phone conference (<https://advancedpracticemanagement.com/ppo-negotiation/>).

What's Inside?

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The Class Action Lawsuit Against Delta—Dead in the Water!

The class action lawsuit filed in 2019 against Delta Dental and all of its affiliates was basically stopped this last Fall. The judge ruled there was not adequate grounds for a class action suit although individual states or groups offices presumably still have the possibility of legal recourse.

As you may recall, the crux of the lawsuit was that Delta has 39 (or so) affiliates across the country that, in effect, collude. They allow the Delta entity for each state to be the only ones that control the fees that the dentists get. So, they don't have to compete for dentists to be providers across affiliate lines, so dentists have little bargaining power. So, this is disappointing. No help from the court.



What NOT to Say at the Front Desk:

Your front desk can make or break a patient's experience before they even sit in the chair. Here are the phrases that could be costing you patients:

"We don't take your insurance" or, "We are not in your network." This immediately shuts the door on current patients and new patients. Instead, try: **"Let me explain how your insurance works in our office"** or, **"We're happy to help you maximize your benefits."** A welcoming approach keeps the conversation—and the relationship—open.

"Just a cleaning." The word "just" minimizes anything that follows. This phrase diminishes the hygienist's expertise and the importance of preventive care. Say instead: **"You're scheduled for your hygiene appointment"** or **"comprehensive cleaning and exam."**

We Believe In You!

We believe that Independent Private Practice is the best way to deliver dentistry. It is best for the patients, the doctors and the staff. Private practices can be more selective with their continuing education and technology. They can also be more adaptable and efficient. **Most importantly, the people who make decisions about patients' dental care are the ones in direct contact with them.** We also believe that professional management support helps **good practices be better** and thrive in a competitive environment.



"Our policy is..." While policies may exist, leading with them sounds inflexible. Instead: **"Here's how we can help..."** or **"What we've found works best is..."**

"Calm down." Being dismissive with a patient never works! Instead, **"I understand this is frustrating. Let's see how we can resolve this together."**

Your front desk is your practice's first impression and your retention secret weapon. Is your team saying the right things?

Contact Kimberly (952-921-3360) for a complimentary front desk systems check-up! She can help you discover how systems and small changes in communication can increase patient satisfaction and practice growth.

AI is Getting Bigger and Bigger in Search:

For users of Google Gemini and Chat GPT, Google Reviews still certainly matter. In any case, having an updated website still matters. We did a random sample of 30 dental websites in Minnesota and found that 18 out of the 30 looked like they had not been updated since the pandemic (or before). Ask yourself:

- Does your website have up to date photos and bios for you and your current staff members?
- Are the graphics from this decade or last decade?
- Ditto for the colors and general design feel?
- Have you looked into true online scheduling? The capability is out there now but still, not many practices are using it. We feel this can be a competitive edge (but have not yet had enough data points to prove it).
- Look at your competitors' websites. Is yours better? Does it reflect who you are?

Even if you're not interested in bringing in any more new patients than you are currently attracting, it's important to have an up-to-date website. Just like it's important to have up to date décor and a sparkling clean office.



Brooke Ackerman

Why Calibration Matters More Than Ever in Today's Dental Practices:

Calibration is one of the most overlooked—and most powerful—drivers of consistency, trust, and growth in a dental practice. While teams often focus on clinical skill development, true excellence happens when **everyone diagnoses, communicates, and recommends treatment the same way**—starting with the doctors.

When doctors within the same practice diagnose differently, it creates confusion for the team and uncertainty for patients. A patient who hears "watch this" from one provider and "this needs treatment now" from another, quickly loses confidence—not just in the diagnosis, but in the practice as a whole.

Calibration isn't about taking away clinical autonomy. It's about creating **alignment around standards of care**, diagnostic thresholds, and communication expectations so patients receive consistent messaging regardless of who they see.

A New Way to Identify Calibration Gaps: To help practices move beyond subjective conversations and assumptions, I'm introducing a **new calibration exercise through APM** that uses targeted surveys to uncover exactly where calibration is breaking down.

These surveys allow us to:

- Identify inconsistencies in diagnosis between doctors.
- Uncover gaps between doctor diagnosis and team understanding.
- Highlight where communication or philosophy differs across the office.

Instead of guessing where misalignment exists, practices will have **clear data** showing where calibration is strong—and where focused conversations and training are needed.

The Result: Clear Diagnosis, Confident Teams, Trusting Patients: When doctors diagnose the same and teams understand how and why treatment is recommended, practices see:

- Increased case acceptance.
- Stronger team confidence.
- Better patient trust and continuity of care.

Calibration isn't a one-time meeting—it's an ongoing process. With the right tools and structure, it becomes a growth strategy rather than a pain point.

High-performing practices prioritize calibration. Contact Brooke (952-921-3360) to take our calibration survey and pinpoint exactly where your team can improve consistency.



Matt Lahn

APM PRACTICE TRANSITIONS

Current Loan Interest Rates:

We spoke to several Regional Directors in the Practice finance industry. They report that rates are currently ranging from high 4s – 5.5% for a dental practice loan. One of the banks we talked to said they are offering a 4.9% rate for a 10–15-year loan. The Federal Reserve met on January 28th and decided to hold steady the central bank's benchmark interest rate in the 3.50%–3.75% range. So it really does pay to shop around!



Wendy Nelson



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Advanced Practice

MANAGEMENT and TRANSITIONS