



# Ensuring your OMS practice is data-driven

By Peter Jackson

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**W**hy is properly maintaining and effectively monitoring data so vital to the health of a thriving OMS practice? Sean Wild, CEO of Practice Metrix – an OMS practice management analysis software company – has a straightforward analogy.

“It’s like putting headlights on a car,” Wild said. “Prior to the headlight, there wasn’t a big discussion about it. Once you show someone headlights and put them on a car, who is going to turn them off and say, ‘I don’t need a stinking headlight at nighttime?’”

Being smart about data is not all about what’s ahead. On top of illuminating future business decisions, effective data documentation, analysis and storage are vital to the state of a healthy OMS practice. Keeping close tabs on your data not only can inform actionable decisions that will help you make more money year to year but also create a more organically run practice day to day that will ensure you deliver the best patient experience. You can increase revenue by paying attention to your data.

## Adjusting to COVID-19

Using data to drive business decisions around referrals is particularly timely as the industry deals with the pandemic. Tracking data allows you to keep an eye on referrals after mandatory COVID-19 lockdowns.

“COVID-19 interrupted our business – it took about two months of our income away,” Wild said. “We also were depending on how quickly general practitioners were getting back to business. Being able to track that with real-time information, you can call them and say, ‘Looks like you are off to a slow start. Is everything good?’”

Potentially, you can help with factors slowing your referring dentists or at least commiserate with them as they get back on their feet. Maybe they will no longer practice in your town, and you’ll know to focus efforts on building relationships with other dentists in the area.

Reviewing your data also is paramount to making sure patients who stayed away from your practice through the tightest periods of lockdown don’t fall through the cracks. Be sure to follow up on implant consults from before the pandemic.

## Boosting referrals

Once practices are on the other side of COVID-19-related interruptions, data will continue to help manage referral-based relationships.

“Let’s say you are a new dentist in town and sending me work, but I am not looking at my numbers and you aren’t in my top 20,” Wild said. “That means you aren’t important with the old ways of looking at data. You could be up 700 to 3,000 percent, and I never even took the time to call you and say thank you. What can that cost me if you can’t see that?”

Not thanking a dentist sending business your way is an unfortunate way to potentially sour what could have otherwise been a mutually beneficial relationship.

## Evaluating collections

Another extremely important question you can answer by analyzing your data is: How are your collections performing?

If you closely track your data and use an analytics software to examine your coding, you can add an extra layer of efficiency to how much money you earn for the work you are already doing.

## Looking at carriers

Another question data can help answer is: Are your carriers unnecessarily holding up your money?

Even if you are confident your carriers will pay what they owe, keeping track of how long it takes them to pay – and what might delay them – can increase the amount of money you collect from year to year. Seeing how cleanly your billers send claims can accelerate the process.

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Oftentimes, a carrier might be slow sending a payment because of clerical errors or an unnoticed change on its side of the process, potentially inhibiting your cash flow in ways that might seem minor transaction to transaction but will make a significant change over a year.

Your data also are your currency in bargaining power with carriers.

A request for a better rate on wisdom tooth extractions will carry more weight if backed up with data stating you are one of the largest providers of that service in a ZIP Code.

### Enhancing marketing

Carefully analyzing patient data also can help pinpoint marketing efforts and inform smart location decisions for practices. It is a mistake to assume all your patients live in the ZIP Code where your practice is located.

On top of implementing marketing campaigns that target the ZIP Codes of most of your patients, you will be able to gauge how successful a new practice can be if you place it in the ZIP Code of most of your patients.

### Improve the day to day

Data are not only key to help drive business decisions that will make your practice more profitable – they also are an incredibly important day-to-day tool that, when used correctly, can help minimize mistakes in any portion of your practice.

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*Good documentation is important to inform your staff and protect your patients.*

*– Dr. Michael Malmquist, OMS and co-owner of Malmquist Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery*

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“Data are very important for the success of our practice,” said Dr. Michael Malmquist, OMS and co-owner of Malmquist Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery in Portland, Ore. “One of the most fundamental changes for success in modern-day practices is to be data-driven. Procedural documentation is designed to help reduce variation within a given process. Documentation is fundamental for good clinical practice and an essential skill for practitioners.”

Proper documentation isn’t just good for the provider – it’s important for the patient.

“Documentation plays a crucial role in any treatment setting,” Dr. Malmquist said. “Good documentation is important to inform your staff and protect your patients. Good documentation promotes patient safety and quality of care. Complete and accurate electronic health records can



help ensure your patients receive the right care and assure continuity of care.”

Keeping close tabs on your data also helps with the little touches that make patients feel more connected with you. Dr. Malmquist sees an extremely high volume of patients five days a week. Documentation is the way he can keep their personal details straight to help establish trust.

“I always put specific details about each patient in there that keeps that personal touch,” he said. “If the patient is a high school student, it’s: ‘Where are they going to school? Are they going to college? What are they studying?’ When they come back, I can ask them how that’s going.”

Efficient management systems are vital for the day-to-day flow of a practice.

“First and foremost is added efficiency, specifically in regard to workflow and processes, impacting a clinician’s ability to achieve quality patient outcomes,” Dr. Malmquist said. “Medical and dental practice management software offers a standardized system for maintaining peak performance: minimizing errors and helping staff operate smoothly and efficiently and reducing patient wait times.”

Data are key to not only informing business decisions, but also to keeping your practice running smoothly day to day. If you ask yourself if your practice is data-driven and your answer is “no,” take steps to change that answer to the affirmative. ■

*OMSVision is the AAOMS-approved practice management software that has been optimized to allow OMSs to use data to drive the day-to-day operations in a practice.*

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