



Digital technology and the patient experience

Modern dentistry is increasingly relying on digital technology to support quality dental care and optimize the patient's experience. Nima Massoomi, DMD, MD, of Bay Area Surgical Arts discusses the importance of digital technologies for the OMS practice.

Q What are the advantages of implementing digital technology in your practice?

A I think an electronic practice management system (PMS) is an important foundation for any practice. A modern PMS allows for data mining. I think that's probably the biggest advantage. If you're non-digital, you can't search for specific things. I make sure someone on my staff scans every physical document into our system so they can become searchable digital documents. It's as easy as adding a keyword and, boom, I can find all the right documents.

Secondly, implementing digital technology allows us to securely back up our data. When you use paper charts, there's no such thing as a redundant backup. In fact, I remember several offices in Napa Valley a few years ago that burned down and only had paper charts. All gone. Digital data offers a clear advantage.

Q How does technology influence patient convenience?

A Patient communication and patient information transfer, and the general ease of transferring information, are great. Patients come in nowadays and say, 'Can I get a copy of this or that?' With paper files, you must scan the physical file and then turn it into a digital document and send it. Now we literally push a button, and they have what they need.

The Gen Z age group is used to text and email. They say, 'You should be texting me or emailing me.' We have this happen all the time, at least on a weekly basis!

Telemedicine is another technology being embraced by younger patients. Everybody is using meeting platforms like Zoom. Most companies don't want to go back to in-person. All the schools give parents and their kids options to do things remotely. I mean, this was inevitable. Offering telemedicine allows us to keep up with the demand.

Q How can artificial intelligence (AI) advances support your practice?

A I think it's too early to tell what that impact is going to be, but I think there's a place for it – especially in the diagnostic process. They're already using AI this way in medicine. In pathology, pathologists review their slides on a microscope and have some natural biases. But AI seems to be catching things that the human eye can't.

There are new dental AI systems that take a radiograph and show you on an X-ray a specific location where a patient has a cavity. It has great potential for patient education. You can explain to a patient that they have a cavity in a specific spot, and as soon as they see the X-ray with it marked (by AI technology) in red, it speaks volumes. I don't want to be sitting there marking the X-ray with all these different things. I'd rather use my time to connect with the patient, talk to them, examine them.

Q AI technology provides advantages to both you as a provider as well as the patient. Do any other technologies make providing care easier?

A Yes, I have been using voice dictation for some time now. I remember the old system of dictation when I was a medical resident. The turnaround time was 24 hours, and you had to verify the dictation to ensure it was correct. Now I use a medical version of voice dictation software and there are very few times I need to make corrections, if any. That allows me to spend more time with patients or my family and less on charting. ■

This Practice Management Matters article is provided by OMSVision. OMSVision by Henry Schein One seeks to help oral and maxillofacial surgeons realize the benefits of effectively tracking referrals. To learn more, visit [OMSVision.com/Referral](https://www.omsvision.com/referral).

