To: Richardson Dentistry

From: Jessica Arnold

Date: February 3, 2016

Subject: Proposal for improving quality of care at dental hygiene appointments

**Introduction:**

A dental recall appointment for a client encompasses a list of tasks such as: updating a medical history, addressing chief concerns, doing an extra- and intra-oral examination, taking bitewing radiographs if recommended, evaluating the gingival and periodontal health status, probing all surfaces, scaling teeth, polishing, providing fluoride treatment if necessary, educating, booking the next visit, and receiving the evaluation and diagnosis by the dentist. These tasks take time to perform properly.

**Statement of Problem:**

Dental hygienists are typically allotted 40 minutes to perform a full periodontal exam with scaling, which is not enough time. This problem is doubled when patients neglect the recommended yearly visit, and instead come every two years. When a clinician is rushed to perform their tasks, errors can be made, or charting details may be left until a subsequent visit in hopes there will be time to update then. This is indicative of low quality care. A thorough diagnosis is necessary in order for treatment planning for home care or specialized care.

**Proposed Solution:**

One possible solution is to add one unit of time to appointments requiring the yearly periodontal update or bitewing radiographs. Units of time at dental offices are 10 minutes in length; therefore, by adding this increment, a 50-minute appointment would be standard. This will ensure that the hygienist has sufficient time to scale and educate at every appointment. To summarize, every patient would benefit from at least one 50-minute appointment per year, additional appointments can be shorter in length when the updates are not required.

**Scope:**

To assess the feasibility of creating 50-minute recall yearly appointments for clientele. I plan to pursue the following areas of inquiry:

* Are periodontal records being updated yearly with the proposed time extension?
* Does the additional time provide hygienists with the ability to provide better education, thus promoting more compliant patient home care?
* Is the dental hygienist’s stress decreased?
* What are the costs to extending recall appointments yearly?
* How will staff react to a change in scheduling?

**Methods:**

My primary data source will be through surveys with staff members and consultations with Dr. M. Richardson. My secondary data sources will be obtained through Internet research on dental hygiene duties and standards of care.

**My Qualifications:**

I have been a registered dental hygienist for close to two years. I have been working at Dr. Richardson’s office for a few months. I am very current in knowledge regarding dental hygiene standards of practice with being a fairly recent graduate. There is success with 50-minute appointment times at another office I work at. Patients and staff are all satisfied and records are up-to-date.

**Conclusion:**

Clearly, action is required to provide the best quality care for the patients at Richardson Dentistry. By addressing the areas of inquiry mentioned above, I can determine the feasibility for this proposal of longer appointment times. With your approval, I will begin my research via staff members and online sources.