

Practice **strategies** in the time of the coronavirus

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We all have been experiencing an extremely difficult period in the past few months. In the following, I would like to show you how you can utilise your social media channels more wisely and provide you with 5 important tips which will make the communication between you and your patients on social media during the current period even more effective. You will learn what to say and how to say it and attract new patients as a result—after all, we are not only dentists but also entrepreneurs with businesses to run.

Tip 1: Seek to become closer to your patients

Use your social media channels to foster a closer relationship with your patients by giving them information on different useful topics during this difficult period. For instance, make short videos in which you explain to your patients how they can put on their protective face masks and remove them safely afterwards. The caption for such a video could be something along the lines of: “My beloved patients—friends—I would like you to know that it is totally normal to be unsure of whether you are properly following the advised safety measures, which have become an essential part of our everyday lives in these unprecedented times. To all of you, I wish good health and prosperity from the bottom of my heart.”

Tip 2: Give advice on dental hygiene

Share important advice with your patients regarding their oral hygiene. Such advice should be based on their new routines in order to keep their mouths healthy. For instance, if your patients take vitamin C in order to boost their immune systems, you can give advice on which form would be the most suitable for their teeth. Or you could publish a post or a video on helping patients keep their teeth healthy during the pandemic.

Tip 3: Offer online consultations

Give your patients the opportunity to conduct an online meeting with you. You could use the following script in a social media post in order to promote this service: “BECAUSE WE CARE—the health and safety of you, our

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precious patients, is our main concern. For this reason, we have a gift for you: we are offering online consultations to discuss any dental issue of concern to you. Additionally, if you desire an aesthetic transformation of your teeth, feel free to send us a private message with a photo of your teeth and a short description of how you would like your smile to be improved. We can schedule your online consultation via Viber, Messenger or WhatsApp [insert in your preferred platforms here]. We might be far from one another, but this can bring us closer together."

Tip 4: Promote a specific treatment that you offer

Use the current time to promote a certain treatment that you carry out in your practice, such as an Invisalign orthodontic treatment or a dental laser treatment. Promote these treatments by showcasing their distinctive advantages and the benefits that they have for your patients. Of course, patients are concerned that a lockdown might be put in place again in the regions where they live and many of them would love to learn more about a certain treatment that they would not necessarily undergo under normal circumstances for different reasons. The text for such a social media post could be as follows: "Why can the modern Invisalign orthodontic method be deemed SAFE and APPROPRIATE, especially during the pandemic? Let us explain. Firstly, during your orthodontic treatment with Invisalign, you do not have to go to dental appointments on a monthly basis. Secondly, if you run out of the aligners, which are usually changed every ten days, you can have the new ones sent to you via a courier service. Thirdly, with the Invisalign method, there are no emergencies! You don't need to worry that brackets or wires will become loose and come off, because in this orthodontic treatment method, there aren't any. Furthermore, the mouth guards used are almost invisible."

Tip 5: Demonstrate protective measures

Showcase all the protective measures that you are offering patients, using photographs and videos. I urge you not to see things from the standpoint of a dentist only, but to put yourselves in the shoes of your patients too. After many days in lockdown, being isolated and living with the fear of becoming infected with the coronavirus, would you not be relieved to know that the dental clinic you are visiting for treatment is putting protective measures and safety procedures in place that have enhanced health benefits for you as the patient? I would like to propose the following text for your social media post: "The health and safety of the patient comes FIRST! We are very cautious when it comes to your health, and therefore we have in place the following measures for YOUR safety: *[list all of these measures, including disposable face masks and their types, disposable protective hats, disposable surgical scrubs, disposable face shields, disposable den-*

tal chair covers, disposable protective barriers (for the camera, LED operatory light, handles, radiographic devices), disposable carbon masks with valve, disposable shoe covers, automatic shoe cover dispenser and dental dams for tooth isolation and infection control]."

Remember that, today, people are spending more time than ever on social media. This is your opportunity to attract many new patients and remind your already loyal patients that you are available and that you are there for them. Practice strategies in light of the coronavirus will also be the topic of my next article. Until then, consider that, in these uncertain times, patients will only invest their money in clinics they believe offer them high-value benefits. This is now true more than ever. Against this background, I would like to leave you with the following question: do you want to be the dentist that patients turn to in such unstable times as these?

If you have further questions or requests, whether you need information or guidance, feel free to reach out to me at dba@yiannikosdental.com.

about the author



Dr Anna Maria Yiannikos obtained her DDS from the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens in Greece in 1990, and she continued her education by completing a two-year Master of Science in Lasers in Dentistry at RWTH Aachen University in Germany, being one of the first two women worldwide to have obtained a master's degree in this field. She also holds an MBA from the Cyprus International Institute of Management. She has owned a dental clinic for more than three decades and leads the innovative Dental Business Administration Mastership Course at RWTH Aachen University. She is an adjunct faculty member of the Aachen Dental Laser Center and is a certified laser safety officer.

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