

Team-work **in** the dental office



Dr Rolf Vollmer

Team-work, team player, team spirit—these terms indicate crucial social skills in almost every sphere of life. We can only succeed if we work as part of a team. In dentistry, as in many other fields, regardless of skill and the protocols in place for many treatment situations, circumstances arise for which guidelines are lacking. Challenges like this can result in stress, anger and helplessness among the dental team.¹

One way of determining the optimum response to such situations in dentistry is to consider what others are doing to overcome these problems. We could consider an example from a non-medical area: the aviation industry. Sometimes flight crews, who are expected to operate as a team, do not co-operate as well as they should and miscommunication can then arise.¹ In order to address this, crew resource management training for flight crews was developed all around the world. Crew resource management is concerned with interpersonal skills, including behaviour training and conflict resolution.¹ It considers how we cope with everyday and unusual situations as a team, and the requirements of being a good team member.¹

Feeling motivated and cheerful places the crew in a better position for dealing with conflict resolution and situations for which there is no checklist or protocol.¹ Achieving the professional and relaxed atmosphere necessary for teamwork in such situations is the pilot's responsibility.¹ In order to do so, he or she should be able to make the rest of the crew feel valued and, therefore, good manners and courtesy are important.¹ Furthermore, according to Lufthansa pilot Rolf Stünkel and aviation journalist and pilot Jürgen Schelling, a good pilot requires discipline, curiosity and a sense of humour.¹ Discipline is needed to make reliable decisions in a fast-changing high-tech environment, and curiosity about one's colleagues and new procedures helps to facilitate the work process, as does a sense of humour, they state in their article.¹

Crew resource management was developed for the aviation industry but it has wide application. Try applying it in your daily practice. Just replace the word "pilot" with "dentist" or "implantologist" and "crew" with "dental team".

I hope you will enjoy our magazine and our annual meeting in Düsseldorf!

Best regards
Dr Rolf Vollmer

¹ Stünkel, Rolf & Schelling, Jürgen, "Team spirit in the cockpit", *thinkx*, 1 (Spring 2014), 16–22.

<http://www.seminarselect.de/fileadmin/downloads/Thinkx_Magazin.pdf> accessed 21 July 2014.