

# OFF THE CUSP

Dental industry news, trends and  
information from Patterson Dental.

## A NEW NORMAL IN DENTISTRY: THE TOUCH-FREE PATIENT EXPERIENCE

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The COVID-19 pandemic has forever changed the world. Dentistry at least—for the foreseeable future—has changed in many ways as well. From the use of [N95 respirators](#), to temperature and pre-patient checks to limiting the size of the reception area, dental team members and patients are entering a brave new world.

As practices begin to re-open and face the challenges that the virus has created, how can a practice maintain the patient experience that patients have come to expect yet create reduced contact points within the practice? Regardless of what practice management software the office uses, teams and patients will appreciate the extra steps taken to create safe and effective dental visits with minimal contact.

### Beyond triage with teledentistry

There has been a lot of discussion over the past few months about [teledentistry](#). Although teledentistry has been around for several years, the explosion that has occurred since coronavirus has taken hold has been nothing short of extraordinary. Using teledentistry to triage patients during the crisis has been essential yet moving beyond the current time to continue to triage emergencies, conduct consultations or follow-up recommendations will be important. Patients will appreciate the convenience of being able to discuss dental issues without having to drive to the office.

### Going paperless for safety and convenience

If the patient does need to come to the office, whether for emergency or regular care, with the new recommendations limiting patients access to the office, using two-way texting to inform the patient when it is appropriate to enter the practice, or even to confirm an appointment, will benefit both the team and patient. It is a well-known fact that the public prefers texting over other forms of communication. Using text messaging to confirm appointments or arrival will instill that the practice is tech savvy and cares about the patient. In the same manner using paperless intake forms such as updating medical histories or other practice-specific information provides a safe touchless environment without the use of pens, paper or clipboards. Patients will appreciate the added convenience of being able to complete the information at a time and place that is convenient for them, whether at home or in their car prior to the appointment. Adding online scheduling will also provide the practice and patients with convenience and wow factor that the practice will need to convey moving forward.

With banking rules and regulations, it is essential that patient payment information such as credit card data, not be maintained either in the practice's software or on paper in the patient's chart. Practices rely on patient payment at time of service for reliable cash flow, whether a fee for service or insurance-focused practice. Patients are accustomed in other areas of their day-to-day lives to order products and services or pay bills online when it's convenient for them. Taking advantage of the patients' desire to be financially responsible and the practice's need to receive timely reimbursement, utilizing online bill paying allows for touchless payment processing whether the practice uses [Eaglesoft](#) or another practice management software. In addition, Eaglesoft exclusive services such as e-Statements, e-Claims, Real Time Eligibility or e-Prescriptions provide convenience, security and timely information electronically with both patients and practices in mind.

## **Communicating new office protocols with patients**

Keeping patients up to date on how the practice is handling infection prevention protocols, new treatments or services offered or dental hygiene specific tips using social media is critical in 2020 and beyond. Yet, many practices try to do social media and other patient communication on their own and may inadvertently create privacy concerns or lack the consistency that is needed for patient engagement. Using patient analytics to determine high-priority patients or targeted patient marketing materials will assist in the practice rebounding after this crisis.

With a variety of solutions to handle the touchless patient experience Patterson can offer exclusive Eaglesoft options while also providing touchless services for other practice management software. Partnering with leading dental vendors such as [RevenueWell](#), [OperaDDS](#), [SolutionReach](#) and [Dental Intelligence](#), Patterson offers a variety of solutions customized to the practice's wants and needs. Contact a Patterson eService Sales Specialist at 800.294.8504 to learn more.

Patients will be searching for practices that provide safe, effective, efficient care both before, during and after their visit. Providing a touchless experience while maintaining the bonds that practices have created with patients will enable your practice to grow despite difficulties caused by the pandemic. What are you going to do to create a touchless yet caring dental practice?

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From Patterson Dental's blog, Off the Cusp. View the original blog post:

<https://www.offthecusp.com/a-new-normal-in-dentistry-the-touch-free-patient-experience/>