

6 keys to team stability

By Robert Levine, DDS, FCPP, FISPPS
Academy News Guest Contributor



I cannot take all the credit for the 6 Keys. They were adopted as part of my practice philosophy over the past 30 years after attending a number of Dr. **Frank Spear's** seminars, where he shared his thoughts on providing successful interdisciplinary "team" treatment.

The following keys are adopted by the entire interdisciplinary team. All who come into contact with a mutual patient ascribe to the same principles. Team members include the implant surgeon, restorative dentist, dental hygienist, dental assistants, dental implant representative and dental laboratory technicians:

- 1 Quality of patient care is paramount.** Each member of the team is committed to doing the best work; even if it means we redo something at no cost to the patient to get the result we all want.
- 2 There is always potential for variations in final results.** Factors affecting final results include: ease or difficulty in working on a particular patient; how a patient heals; patient compliance; and a clinician's skill level.
- 3 Clearly defined expectations of one another.** Communicating what is and is not possible amongst interdisciplinary team members keeps the team focused on a common treatment goal with the patient's best interest as the major focus.
- 4 Accepting the fact that individual team members have greater expertise in their specific field.** If we are working a complex case in an interdisciplinary fashion involving multiple specialists (e.g., endodontics, orthodontics, etc.), their individual opinions are most valued in making a final decision that involves their expertise.
- 5 Each team member accepts responsibility for the treatment they render.** If, during the course of treatment, a team member notices an area that needs correction by another member of the team, we all know we can call that clinician and have confidence the problem will be managed by them directly *with no ands, ifs or buts!*
- 6 Respect for one another and a commitment to the team relationship.** When things do not go as planned, we do not abandon the team. Rather, we take the opportunity to learn from the experience, so as to improve future outcomes. We are always trying together to improve this relationship. Who always benefits is the patient!

Teams outperform individuals, especially when performance requires multiple skills, judgement and expertise. The process becomes seamless for the patient as everyone is on the same page...like a symphony. When a patient has this "seamless" experience in our offices ("symphony in action") regarding their individual care, they are most appreciative and truly value their patient-centered care. The above "6 Keys" is a blueprint for practice success as well as self-satisfaction in our profession.

Dr. **Robert Levine** is a periodontist and AO Fellow from Philadelphia, PA.



Dr. Robert Levine