



THE DAILY GRIND

DRILLING DEEPER INTO DENTISTRY

Be an Influencer

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These days you cannot spend much time on social media without stumbling across an “influencer.” What does this term really mean? How does a person reach this status? How do I become an influencer in the dental field? I believe that each and every one of us can become a dental influencer in our own way by focusing on what’s in front of us before trying to create national or international change. Statistically, everyone cannot be a recognized lecturer, researcher or clinician. But we can focus on being the most positively influential dental professional possible in our immediate vicinity and then work out from there. To be an influencer, all you need to do is impact one person, not an entire profession or society.

I suggest you try to positively influence your family and friends first. I find the best way to accomplish this is leading by example. Practice good oral hygiene, let your children see you doing so, and then help them understand how and why it is important. Maybe you don’t have a million online followers, but by teaching your children good oral hygiene, you have done them an immense service. It is well known that poor oral hygiene at an early age usually yields dental

problems. Dental problems can result in pain, expenses, missed school and self-esteem issues. Seemingly basic aspects of life can have lasting impacts on individuals. Small positive influences now yield positive dividends in the future.

You can also be a dental influencer among your friends. Take enough continuing education courses to have a commanding knowledge of our profession. Keep current with media and trends. In doing so, you will become the go-to person your friends call when they need accurate dental information.

If you have already attained influencer status with your friends and family, focus on your patient population. Quality dental patient care is the cornerstone of any successful dental career, but there are opportunities for you to spread your influence outside the walls of your office. Many dentists sponsor a local little league team, but have you ever gone to a game? Consider bringing coolers full of cold bottled water or low-sugar sports drinks. Use the occasion to meet kids, coaches and parents. If the coach allows, take a few minutes to speak to everyone about the importance of sports mouthguards and how to prevent dental injuries. Teach them what to do if a dental injury occurs and when to get help. Put a face on your sponsorship.

You can also be an influencer among your coworkers. Learn to be prepared, to anticipate potential complications. This skill is critical when dealing with chairside situations as well as front-office situations. Do what is expected of you, and then exceed those expectations whenever possible.

There are also opportunities to become a dental influencer within the dental education system and organized dentistry. Helping educate future colleagues is rewarding and helps students, their future patients, the overall public health and your own psyche. Stay active in local and regional chapters of organized dentistry. Consider volunteering to be on a board of directors. By volunteering and staying active in your community, you open yourself up to other influencers and the possibility of being influenced yourself. Learn from other members in the dental community and apply their influences in your own dental practice and life in general.

You need not be nationally recognized in the dental profession to be considered an influencer. Each of us have the power to command influence every day. I encourage you to take a moment and find what areas of your life might work best for you to enact additional positive influence, and then go for it.

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