

# Transitions Roundtable

We ask two experts the same question on a complex issue.



**FRED HEPPNER**

**THE FIRST STEP** is to start with a solid foundation. First, construct a strong preventive care maintenance program. Instill discipline, attention to detail, and then follow through with the program. Second, establish a philosophy of complete dental health. A healthy patient periodontally is great; a healthy patient periodontally and fully restored to optimal dental health is priceless! Seek a cooperative approach between the doctor and hygienist to fully restore each and every patient in the practice.

A healthy practice generates about 20% to 35% of income from the hygiene department. A lower percentage might be healthy for a strong restorative practice, although it might point toward a weak hygiene program in need of repair in other practices.

Look at how far ahead patients are appointed. This is certainly practice specific. Consequently, examine how many patients schedule their next appointment when they leave their current visit. Seek to reach at least 85% as a benchmark.

Measure hygiene proficiency. This is the actual number of appointments kept versus those available. When this number is 90% or better, the recall system is working very well.

Measure the ratio of perio to prophylaxis—periodontal procedures versus adult and child prophylaxis as compared to the total of the two, but be careful about the demographics. A more aged patient population in a practice should likely yield higher ratios of perio to prophylaxis. Under normal circumstances, a healthy practice would see about 35% to 40% perio versus prophylaxis procedures.

Using technology to its fullest is also a sign of a strong hygiene department. Practices that don't use intraoral cameras and other patient education tools might fall short of helping patients become fully restored. Use technology at every opportunity. Require images on the computer screen in the operatory so that patients can see for themselves the need for restorative treatment.



**TOM SNYDER, DMD, MBA**

**QUESTION:**  
What are the key performance indicators for a hygiene department to determine the department's success?

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**THERE ARE FIVE COMMON** hygiene department key performance indicators (KPIs) that can be used to gauge the success of a general practice's hygiene department. The most commonly used KPI is to use 35% total hygiene production as a percentage of total practice production. This ratio should minimally be 25% for a general practice and as high as 35% if the hygiene department is performing well.

Another KPI that measures the level of perio procedures being provided in a general practice is the ratio of perio procedures to total hygiene production. Analyze the frequency of these procedure codes—Code 04341 for periodontal scaling and root planing, and Code 04910 for periodontal maintenance procedures. A ratio greater than 10% to 15% is indicative of a practice that has a strong perio orientation.

However, the majority of general practices that we appraise have a ratio of perio procedures to hygiene production only between 2% to 3%! If you preappoint your recare patients, calculate the percentage of hygiene patients scheduled for their next recare appointment. This ratio should be at least 90%; otherwise you'll experience slippage in your hygiene department, with many patients missing their normal recall interval.

Another KPI that can be used if you employ multiple hygienists is hygiene production per hour. Simply put, calculate the hours worked per month and divide those by the monthly hygiene production. You can pinpoint underperforming hygienists as well as any scheduling issues with this ratio.

If you want to determine the overall profitability of your hygiene department, apply the hygiene compensation ratio. This KPI measures the total compensation paid to your hygienists over their total hygiene production. Your goal should be to have a hygiene compensation ratio between 30% to 33%. If you offer a full range of benefits, i.e., pension plan, health insurance, etc., this ratio might be slightly higher.

If you're in the market to purchase a general practice, a critical review of the practice's production reports, and applying several of these KPIs, will provide you with a preview of your potential for practice growth, especially in the hygiene area. If you're a practice owner, using all of these KPIs to assess your hygiene department's effectiveness will make your practice more successful. **DE**