



ORTHO2

Improved Efficiency with a Clinical Coordinator

by **Andrea Cook**

Many successful practices have enhanced the efficiency of the clinic by using a clinical coordinator. The smooth running of a practice seeing 70 or more patients a day often requires someone to take the lead in trouble-shooting what to do when a patient comes late or has a non-scheduled repair, pointing out to the orthodontist which chair to go to next during the work day, overseeing what the clinical staff does on a non-patient day, taking responsibility for patients beyond their estimated completion date, training new employees, etc.

If you opt to incorporate this very important position in your practice, many things must be considered. First of all, who should fill this role? It may not always be the person with the most clinical experience but should probably be the team member with the most skill, energy, and ability to inspire others.

The role will also need clear definition from the orthodontist and guidance in achieving the outlined job description. Responsibility and the authority to carry out needed decisions are also required.

Then one must determine whether or not the clinical coordinator will have a column of patients or whether she is to concentrate on clinical coordinator duties such as training new employees, ordering, assisting other clinical team members with more challenging procedures, overseeing emergency appointments, and helping the orthodontist move through the clinic most efficiently.

JOB DESCRIPTION—CLINICAL COORDINATOR

Reports To: The Doctor

Summary of Position:

Responsible for the smooth running of the clinic, hiring and training of clinical personnel, communication with parents and patients about treatment, monitoring of the estimated completion dates, monitoring status changes for active patients, monitoring patient compliance, overseeing

patient motivation contests, and community relations with other clinical professionals.

The goals of the clinical coordinator are to listen to the patient's needs and expectations, to use her verbal skills to create and nurture on-going relationships, and to build the patient's trust and confidence in the doctor and staff.

Areas of responsibility may include: Clinical Assisting, Delivery of Patient Care, Training and Coaching Clinical Staff, Inventory of Clinical Supplies, Supply Ordering, Patient Contests, Clinical Performance Statistics, and Continuing Education.

Responsibilities

Clinical

- Perform the duties of a clinical assistant as needed.
- Troubleshoot problems in the clinical area.
- Ensure each team member is performing his/her duties.
- Serve as the doctor's advocate in the clinic. Inform the doctor of any problems.
- Make clinical decisions regarding replacement of bands, bonds, etc. if the doctor is involved in patient care away from the treatment area or monitor assistant's decisions as they are made. Communicate with other chairsides regarding failed appointments, canceled appointments, or late patients.

Practice Management

- Set and monitor goals jointly with the team and doctor.
- Oversee that all protocols for clinical procedures are written and adhered to.
- Oversee that all protocols for sterilization procedures are written and adhered to.

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- Keep clinical manual updated.
- Lead team meetings effectively.
- Maintain inventory for clinical supplies or delegate if appropriate.

Practice Promotion

- Develop and implement approaches to attract a constant flow of new patients and to maximize referrals.
- Maintain good relationships with referring dentists and other professionals in the community.
- Develop patient contests to promote compliance.

Staff Management

- Recruit and interview potential new clinical staff members. Make recommendations to the doctor for hiring, corrective action, and terminations for clinical team members.
- Proactively and constructively, resolve personnel issues within the clinical team with the involvement of staff and the doctor as necessary. Maintain and help enforce personnel policies for clinical staff.
- Assist the doctor with clinical staff performance reviews.
- Assist in defining job descriptions with the input and assistance of the staff and the doctor.
- Assign non-patient job duties.
- Participate in and share any discussions with the patients regarding compliments and complaints.
- Determine day-off coverage of schedule with assistance of Office Coordinator.
- Suggest incentives to promote teamwork and constant practice growth.

Supervision, Education, and Training of Staff

- Provide educational opportunities through literature review and seminars to inform staff of new techniques, appliances, and trends in the profession.
- Train new clinical staff.
- Structure educational plans for self and staff to maintain the highest level of expertise in clinical functions.
- Promote open communication and feedback from staff regarding new suggestions, information learned, and problem resolutions.
- Work closely with Office Coordinator and the doctor to ensure overall practice is cohesive, delivering the highest level of patient quality care, efficient, and effective.
- Place classified employment ads. Screen and interview applicants. Schedule best candidates for an interview with the rest of the clinical team. Check references.
- Orient and train new clinical assistants. Review Orientation Checklist with each new clinical hire.
- Check that the clinical assistants perform their tasks to the standard set.
- Maintain the scheduling of all full time and part time Dental Assistants for clinical duties.

- Plan regular meetings to evaluate beginning and final records so staff can learn what works and what doesn't work in treatment.
- Set up yearly performance reviews for each clinical team member with the doctor.
- Organize in-house educational seminars and training as needed for members of the clinical team.
- Be certain all staff know what to write on the bracket table cover before the doctor comes over to the chair.
- Lead the clinical staff in a manner that promotes teamwork, cooperation, and understanding.
- Be an active participant in staff meetings and committee meetings.
- Perform other tasks as assigned by the doctor.
- Work cohesively with fellow team members to provide an atmosphere of trust, mutual respect, and cooperation.

Education / Experience:

Minimum of two years experience in management and two years experience in an orthodontic practice.

Skills / Abilities:

Clinical: Proficiency in all clinical skills.

Interpersonal: Good interpersonal skills to maintain smooth running team environment throughout the office

Managerial: Effective skills to inspire and motivate staff. Organizational skills.

Writing Skills: Composition, grammar, and spelling skills to prepare and update manuals

Verbal Skills: Effective verbal skills to train, to coach staff, and to communicate to the doctor, referring dentists, parents, and patients.

Computer Skills: Proficiency in the Treatment Chart and On-Deck portions of ViewPoint and in Microsoft Word.

Problem Solving: Effective conflict resolution, problem identification, problem resolution, and decision making skills. ◉

About the Author



Andrea Cook is a clinical orthodontic specialist with over 20 years of clinical chairside and management experience. Since effectively training clinical team members is a critical portion to the advancement of clinical productivity and profitability Andrea works with orthodontic offices across the country to increase their efficiency, decrease emergencies, implement indirect bonding, and improve communication.