



ORTHO2

Running Backwards in High Heels

by **Penny Mustard**

The other day at the airport... I had just finished an hour and half ordeal of clearing ticketing and security while trying to assist my temporarily disabled husband (motorcycle accident), when it was discovered he had left something at the ticket counter. So... as the plane was beginning to board I ran backwards (with high heels) through the terminal, through security, to the ticket counter and back again through security, and finally back to the gate.

It occurred to me as I laugh at the thought of myself doing this... this is exactly what "we" are doing to ourselves in the orthodontic office.

Technology in the orthodontic world is changing at such a rapid pace, it is difficult to keep up. The very technology that is supposed to make life easier, faster, and more efficient is tying us up in knots. Just because we can do something does not mean we have to.

We have gone from driving "Love Bugs" to driving "Ferraris" at record speed. Many offices now incorporate digital imaging (some 3-D cone beam), most have a practice management system, plus other software programs to help them go paperless and become a high tech office. I have seen offices get so caught up with all the new "stuff" they lose sight of what is really important.

Now, don't get the wrong idea here... my consulting business is geared toward helping practices to become more high tech.

The point I am trying to convey is that **we use technology to get more from our practice, but not let technology be the focus** or eat away at productive clinical and staff time. There are, in many offices, hours spent trying to figure out what the software is capable of doing or what reports can be generated. And each time a practice employs a new staff member hours are spent on training, and often times re-structuring systems to accommodate changes.

So how to you best use this powerful tool? First think about what you track and why. Although we are able to track a new patient 60+ different ways with status codes (including what color the little brother's eyes are), is it necessary? What you really need is an accurate profile of the new patient.

The focus of many practices has been on practice stats and as a result many practices have taken their attention away from a powerful tool within the software... procedure codes. Procedure codes are the core of what we do... treat the patient.

Procedure codes are the core of the electronic treatment chart... and quite frankly many of us did a better job of it when we wrote on paper charts. I challenge you to review your treatment chart entries and see if they make sense. Not only do procedure codes document what clinically was done, with Auto-Events they can trigger communications, financial charges, scheduling, patient tracking, treatment planning, and staff assignments. Maybe it is time to re-evaluate how your procedures are set up and used.

Bottom-line: Your practice management system is a powerful instrument. Learn to use it to wisely... attend users meetings—an excellent time to hear how others are using the systems and attend classes you learn more about how to use the software. Take advantage of webinars, on-line teaching sessions, and don't shy away from the consulting help you need. All of this can save you wasted inefficient staff hours trying to figure it out... time that can be focused on what you really do... patient care. ♡

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About the Author



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