



Dentistry Has a Heart: Marketing with Intention

by Laura Jamison



IT IS THE LITTLE RED DRESS logo that catches my eye every year. It signifies *Go Red for Women*, a day honoring the women who die each year from heart disease, the number one killer of your female patients. February happens to be *American Heart Health Month*. In dentistry, February has also traditionally been celebrated as *Children's Dental Health Month*. As practice evolution consultants, this means that we have encouraged our clients in the past to send their hygienist to preschools and elementary schools to teach children about their oral hygiene. For many dentists, this is the only external activity that the team engages in as part of their marketing plan. I propose that dentists also engage in hosting "Dentistry Has a Heart."

It is no longer a surprise to the general population that there is a link between inflammation in the oral cavity and

cardiac health. In a study published in 2002 by Buhlin, Gustafsson, Hakansson and Klinge of Sweden entitled "Oral Health and Cardiovascular Disease," the conclusion confirmed that oral health, and especially gingival inflammation, is associated with cardiovascular disease. It is now clear that we as dental professionals can help keep our patients' hearts healthy. This is an unbelievable opportunity to help our profession to finally be regarded as doctors with a commitment to the patients' overall health and well-being, and Dentistry Has a Heart month is the perfect time to start spreading the word.

As a marketing consultant, I know that the target market for dentistry is female. The women of the world are more interested in cosmetic dentistry, schedule their husbands and children for dental appointments and are generally more health conscious. The challenge as a consultant is to find methods that allow the dentist to feel comfortable promoting his or her practice.

This year, we celebrated American Heart Health month and Go Red for Women day on February 6, 2009. We wanted to show the population that dentists have big hearts.

These are suggested activities to go with the concept of promoting Dentistry Has a Heart Month next February (incorporate these ideas in the years to come):

1 During your dental examinations, record blood pressure readings and take

a resting heart rate, then record the numbers on your patient's chart each time they come in.

2 Educate patients with periodontal symptoms about the effect of the bacteria in the oral cavity being directly linked to cardiac health. Hygienists should be committed to explaining the information in the context of your heart health promotion.

3 Send letters to cardiologists in your local community to engage them in your practice activities. Ask for printed materials that can support your campaign.

4 Go online to www.goredforwomen.org and enroll online to receive a free Little Red Dress pin and ideas for embracing this national campaign.

5 Decorate the office with hearts and the logo of the little red dress.

6 Send Valentine cards or blank note cards with the Dentistry has a Heart logo to patients after treatment (e-mail me at jamisonconsulting@verizon.net for the logo).

7 Send a letter to patients prior to the month-long celebration to encourage them to wear red. Offer to donate \$1 to the local chapter of the American Heart Association if they do. This is an opportunity to mail your patients a letter. It is a great way to remind them that you are there for them.

Have fun while doing something helpful. Encourage the team to wear red throughout the month. Visit local cardiologists' offices with invitations

to your practice in a goody bag filled with toothbrushes and floss. Consider the benefits of cross-promotion. These physicians may be excited to hear from a dentist who has a heart for this cause. Give away some fun promotional items. To order promotional products that fit in line with this theme, log on to www.dentistryhasaheart.com.

Dental teams have the biggest hearts of any organization I know. It has been my privilege to work with dentists and teams since 1981. Try something different. In this case, it will bring attention to the heart of the matter which can save someone's life.

Laura Jamison has worked as a consultant focused on dynamic team building and solid business management principles since 1981. Great experience was gained working for the Pride Institute with Dr. Jim Pride for six years and in 1992, Laura began her own consulting firm, Jamison Consulting. Laura has personally guided over 1,500 practices and has a particular passion for working with dentists who specialize in quality dentistry in a fee-for-service environment. Since 1986, Laura has spoken for *Dentaltown*, Seattle Study Clubs, as well as national, state and county dental societies in the United States, Sweden and Australia. In 2009, she is the featured speaker for the Seattle Study Club meeting in May. She is the founder of dentistryhasaheart.com. Her publications can be found in *Dental Economics*, *Data Vision Australia*, *Florida National Dental Congress*, *Today's FDA*, *ADA Dental Teamwork*, *Inside Dentistry* and the *AADOM Observer*. Laura's passion is educating and her personal experiences were recently published in a book entitled, *Powerful Practice*, Volume 2.



▶ a patient's story

“From the minute I walked into the office I felt at home. This all-women dental group (from what I saw) was very friendly and professional. Although I was embarrassed, they didn't make me feel like I was a bad person for not going to a dentist sooner.

Dr. Stumpf and her staff made me feel like I had been a client for a long, long time. I feel like I found a dentist in today's world who treats her patients like a doctor on 'Little House on the Prairie' — but with all the modern technology. I look forward to my next appointment (next month) and the reconditioning and replacement work I will have done.

Whenever I see a 1-800-DENTIST commercial now, I will smile knowing that what they say is true. I'm glad I made the call that got me to a dentist I am very happy with.”

– Denise B.
Okauchee, Wisconsin

Janelle Ferber-Stumpf, DDS
Pewaukee, WI
Member since 1998

▶ a practice's story

“I received the letter from Fred regarding surviving the economy and loved it. I had been thinking about adding more emergency time and this letter convinced me to call Member Services and expand my emergency hours. Thank you for sending the letter and keeping the lines of communication open.

I also love the *Elevator* commercials — they're great!”

Randall Segovia, DDS
Oceanside, CA
Member since 2006