“We need to establish patient-centred care in all practices”

An interview with Dr Kashif Hafeez, UK

As a practising dental implantologist in southern England, Dr Kashif Hafeez regularly speaks on clinical governance and the concept of patient-centred care at congresses and seminars worldwide. In anticipation of his lecture at this year’s UAE International Dental Conference & Arab Dental Exhibition in Dubai in February, Dental Tribune had the opportunity to speak with Hafeez about the various aspects of this approach and why he believes patient-centred care should be implemented in every practice.

Dental Tribune: While “patient-centred care” is a widely used term around the globe, there seems to be little understanding of what it actually entails. Could you explain the fundamentals of this concept in your opinion?

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In the UK, we have learnt a great deal over the last 20 years and have moved forward in improving ourselves. Now, we have a culture of transparency and placing patient concerns at the centre of our daily practice. The General Dental Council has made it mandatory for health care professionals to report any concerns about patient safety and patients possibly being at risk. It is also mandatory for health care professionals to receive continuing training throughout their careers on the issue of whistle-blowing and how to raise their concerns to the proper authorities.

Patient-centred practice breaks the cavalier attitude some of us may develop over the years. In our practice, we consider patient feedback as an important source of suggestions and inspiration to improve ourselves. We audit the feedback received and make appropriate changes to our system arising from this and follow this cycle on regular basis to achieve excellence.

How can this concept be applied in other dental practices, and what are the main components necessary to achieve it?

We need to establish patient-centred care in all practices. It is actually not that difficult even though the whole atmosphere and attitude of the practice has to be changed. We need to regularly identify shortcomings in our practices and audit our policies and methods. Lessons learnt from our audits should be implemented and regular re-audits should be planned. We also need to identify our educational needs, develop a personal development plan based on those needs and then plan our learning accordingly. Targets should be set realistically.

We have to develop a system of openness in our practices, and we need to encourage our colleagues to raise concerns if they are not happy with any methodology or policies. An environment of research and development has to be established, and we should keep up to date with the latest developments in dentistry, such as implantology. The world is moving at a very rapid pace, and with the advent of new technologies in our modern world, it is very easy to fall behind the rest. We should also move out of our comfort zones to develop new skills and methods.

It is a team effort after all, so training our team and keeping our team together in this effort is equally important. In our practice, we ensure that our health care professionals are well trained and up to date with recent advancements.

For those interested in making their practice patient-centred, what is a good way to start?

I think the first step is to develop a policy on clinical governance and implement it all practices. Clinical governance covers all the aspects of patient-centred practice and the various components will become clear with this policy in place. We offer courses in clinical governance and patient-centred practice policies for individual practices and educational institutions and will be happy to help any organisation that wishes to implement it.

Thank you very much for the interview.