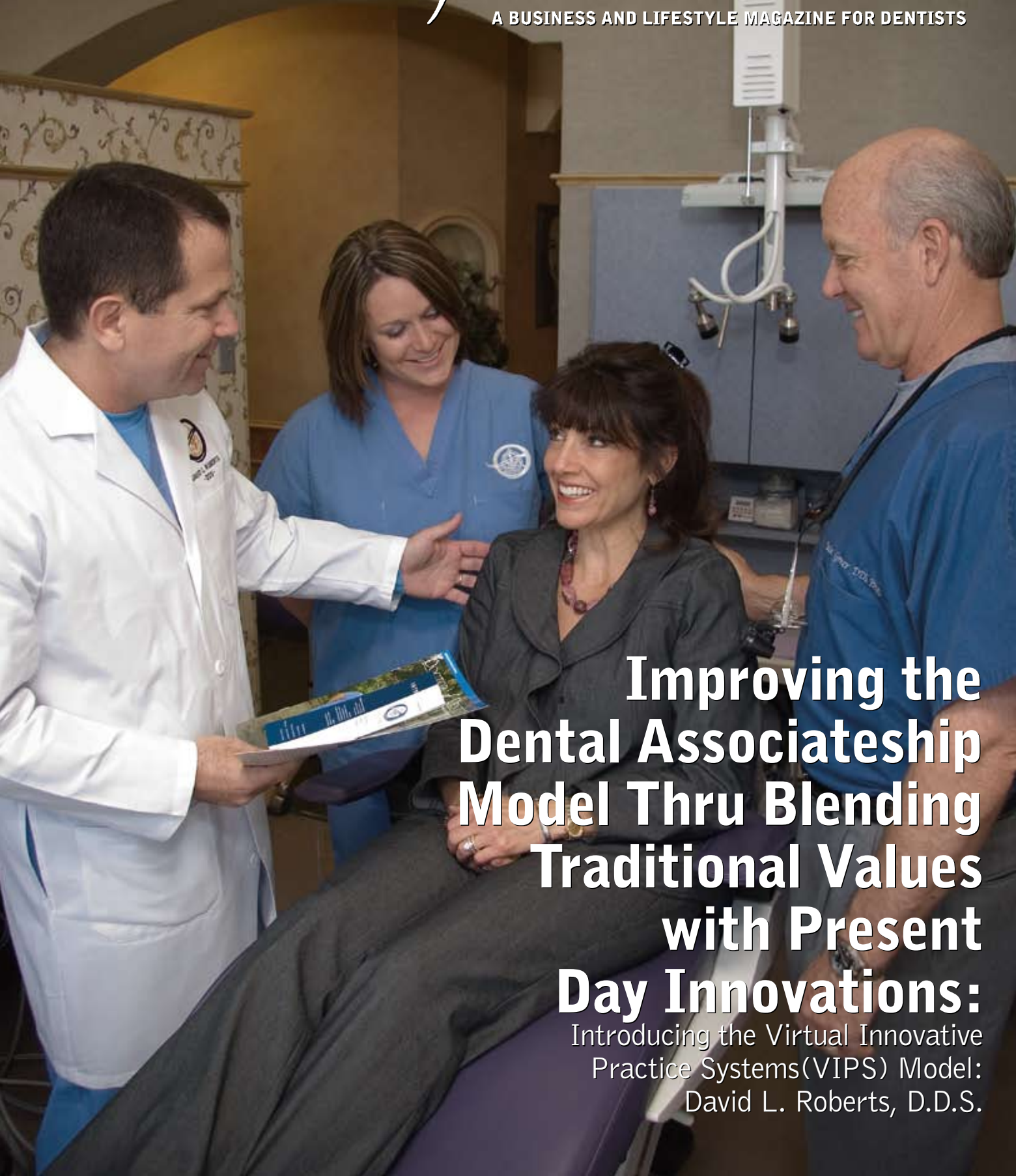


DOCTOR *of* DENTISTRY

A BUSINESS AND LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE FOR DENTISTS



Improving the Dental Associateship Model Thru Blending Traditional Values with Present Day Innovations:

Introducing the Virtual Innovative
Practice Systems(VIPS) Model:
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By Tina Cauller

THE VIRTUAL INNOVATIVE PRACTICE SYSTEMS (VIPS) MODEL IS A WIN-WIN-WIN FOR THE PATIENT, THE PROFESSION AND THE PROVIDER.

Now, more than ever, it is an exciting time to be a dentist! Innovations are emerging within and around the field of dentistry at an amazing pace. Digital radiography, lasers, implants, imaging, CEREC and Invisalign treatments exemplify some of these transformations. But, while these revolutionary changes offer consumers more options and better results than ever before, they bring with them some challenges.

"In times of change, it is the learners who inherit the earth, while the learned find themselves beautifully equipped to deal with a world that no longer exists."

—Eric Hoffer

BLENDING PATIENT NEEDS WITH PRESENT-DAY REALITIES

As the profession naturally evolves, and as dentists embrace the technology that today's well-informed patients demand, dental practices face skyrocketing overhead costs. Overhead in most

Dr. James H. Reisman and Dr. Roberts have worked together as a team for more than 20 years.





Dr. Roberts and his team provide each office with a customized practice information notebook to facilitate seamless communication with each office and each patient.

“Enduring patient-centered core values have guided us through the evolutionary changes in our profession.”

adjunct to existing referral patterns), offers a viable addition to the more traditional patterns.

NAVIGATING CHANGE

Looking to historical trends, Dr. Roberts notes, “Dentistry was originally a traveling profession, and the tools of the trade went along with the dentists in a little case when they set out to treat patients. With the advent of radiography, dental equipment became too big to easily transport and the dentist was tethered to an office. In the 1970s and ’80s, the cost of office space soared, and technology boomed. Digital dental X-rays came on the scene, as did digital dental records. Offices went paperless, and phones became mobile. Offices grew in size and in opulence — and continued to grow more expensive. And, as technology boomed, the cost of integrat-

“This model is a wonderful asset to Owner Dentists who wish to expand the scope of services offered to patients within their existing facilities. Blending patient needs with solid business practices is a winning formula for success in any industry. “ I have seen the *VIPS* model used in a variety of clinical settings. The end result for the patient and the practitioner has been excellent. The *VIPS* system integrates exceptional core values that result in a valuable services to all parties” states Dan Lewis, President of Lewis Health Profession Services Inc.

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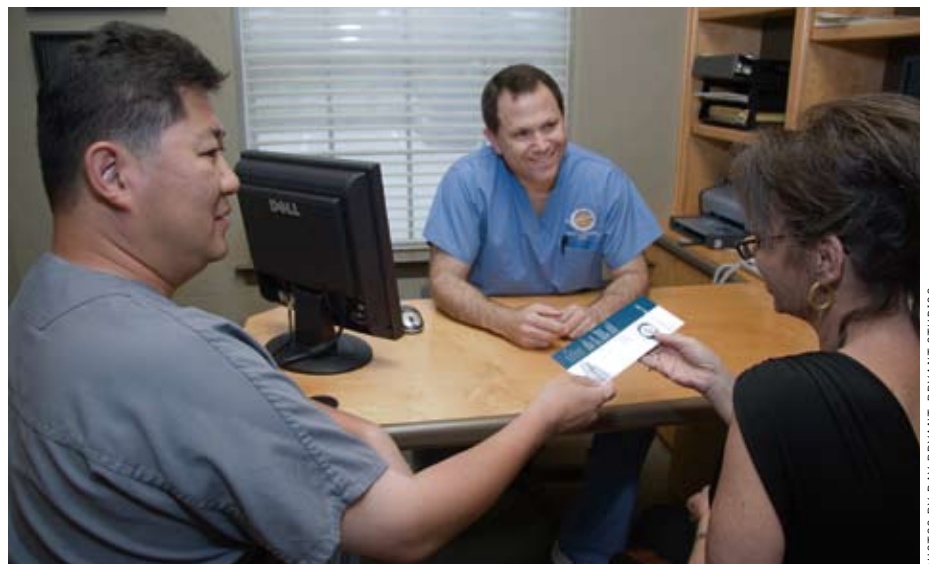
dental practices has been increasing for the last 30 to 40 years. In the 1970s, the average overhead was 48 percent of production. By 1980, it was closing in on 60 percent, and by the mid-1990s, it was passing 65 percent. Now, at the beginning of the 21st century, overhead in some offices has reached 70-80 percent and is approaching unsustainable levels.

According to David L. Roberts, D.D.S., “As individual practitioners, we are all challenged by the increasing emotional and financial costs associated with maintaining a state-of-the-art practice. From the beginning of our careers, overhead costs come at us relentlessly from all directions in the form of significant educational, regulatory, employee, capital, emotional and facility costs. Overhead costs have become a monster living within our profession and are a problem for dentists and patients alike. In order to ensure a healthy future, we must challenge ourselves to embrace change within our existing systems.”

Dr. Roberts has found that the *Virtual Innovative Practice Systems (VIPS)* model (an

Dr. Kent Smith notes, “This service has helped us deliver one of our stated goals — to treat patients within the environment that we have developed and fostered. We can seamlessly and efficiently accommodate our patients within their own envelope of acceptance.”

Dr. JoJo Cheung introduces Dr. Roberts to one of his patients as they discuss the procedure prior to treatment and suggest a visit to Dr. Roberts’ website, www.robertsdds.com for detailed practice information.





Above: Dr. Dale Greer and Dr. Roberts meet face to face, as they have for more than 15 years, to codiagnosis and develop a customized patient treatment.

Right: Dr. Roberts' team transforms the general dentistry operatory into a surgery setting complete with an AED, emergency airway and drug kits where the patient's vital signs are monitored throughout the entire procedure.

ing the latest procedures into a competitive dental practice piled even more into the overhead column.”

There is no quick fix to this perplexing problem. Dr. Roberts explains, “Many dentists have sought to address the ubiquitous overhead dilemma through more efficient utilization of their facility using various office sharing arrangements — partnerships, associateships, renting office space and so on. Each has its pros and cons. However, these options have not always supported the meaningful, patient-centered, consistent and long-term results that dentists anticipated. However, as long as we keep our core values intact as a profession, we will find the right answers through the many choices we have as professionals. *A patient-centered approach is the key.* Enduring patient-centered core values have guided us through the evolutionary changes in our profession.”

A SOLUTION OF INNOVATION AND IMAGINATION

Russia's Catherine the Great once observed, “A great wind is





Dr. Roberts discusses treatment options for an upcoming procedure with a patient of Dr. Cliff Avant.

financial and legal issues of the VIPS model are mostly identical to the traditional dental associate model,” Dr. Roberts notes. “A key difference is that the *VIPS* model is only a functioning part of your office when your patients need it. It grows as your practice grows, without the pressure to keep a full-time, traditional associate busy.”

Dr. Roberts believes that the same flood of technological advancements that has revolutionized our everyday lives facilitates the success of the *VIPS* model. “The *VIPS* model became practical with the downsizing and portability of various medical and non-medical devices, along with the omnipresent proliferation of the Internet, Web access and other advanced technologies which enable fast, efficient dentist-dentist and dentist-patient communication.”

A PATIENT-CENTERED SOLUTION

“First and foremost, any evolutionary change within our profession must be a benefit to the patient,” Dr. Roberts says. “The *VIPS* model offers a host of benefits to the patient — beginning with giving patients

Dr. Sandi Hamm, who has worked with Dr. Roberts for almost 20 years, explains, “Having an established relationship with the dentist gives the patient a huge level of confidence and often allows them to proceed with treatment without hesitation. This business model provides some financial benefits to the doctor, but the number one advantage is the benefit to the patient.”

blowing, and that gives you either imagination or a headache.” Dr. Roberts has been on a quest in search of solid solutions to some of the troubling trends in dentistry that are causing headaches in dental offices around the country. This journey has fueled his imagination. The *VIPS* model, a variation of the traditional dental associate model, binds patient needs with business realities within our profession to ameliorate the overhead monster Roberts describes.

“The *VIPS* model offers many of the same benefits contained in the traditional dental-associate model, but is much simpler to administer, engage or disengage. It’s like the difference between marrying an associate dentist and dating one.”

In Dr. Roberts’ experience, the *VIPS* model is succeeding in areas where the traditional model falls short. In fact, the *VIPS* model’s refreshing simplicity is the key to its success. Dr. Roberts asks, “How many times have you heard patients say things like, ‘Can’t you do this procedure for me, or please send me to someone who does this all day long, everyday?’ This practice model offers the dentist a solution and lessens the complexity of practice-management responsibilities. In these cases, it’s not only the patient’s dream, but a lot of dentists’ dreams, too — simplicity.”

HOW DOES IT WORK?

The *Virtual Innovative Practice System (VIPS)* model is where the practitioner travels on an itinerant basis between several offices — in much the same way a surgeon practices in several different hospitals. This model will certainly never replace the existing referral patterns we have today within our profession; however, it offers a patient an additional choice for some of the more routine procedures. “The

the *option* to receive the treatment they need in the dental office they have chosen and in which they are most familiar. Additionally, the communication between the host dentist and the referring dentist can be enhanced because the communication is more often face to face. Also, combination procedures requiring the skills of multiple dentists, such as extractions and denture delivery, can be done on the same day in the same office. Patient anxiety is reduced by not having to go to a new office and meet a new set of staff members. They are already familiar with their dentist’s financial policies, so there are fewer surprises. And, they can be personally introduced to the referral dentist by their own dentist. Finally, the biggest advantage

A member of the surgical team discusses postoperative care and prescribed medications with the patient to be sure all questions and concerns are answered.



the *VIPS* model brings to the patient is that it allows the dentist to focus on a reduced repertoire of procedures. It is a patient-centered solution that allows dentists to shift some priorities — from practice management back to patient care.”

RESPONDING TO CHANGE

Dr. Roberts points out, “While change is natural and inevitable, survival depends on being responsive to change. Look at the examples of successful corporations — their leaders embraced change and innovated their way to success.” Dr. Roberts likens his practice to Southwest Airlines, a company known for its remarkable strength derived through simplicity and efficiency. Like the Southwest strategy, Dr. Roberts’ practice model offers patients safety, value and convenience. “This practice is the Southwest Airlines of wisdom teeth — we do one thing and we do it very well.”

Dr. Roberts adds, “The *VIPS* model is not a quick fix for the

overhead problem; it’s simply a step in the right direction. It helps dentists expand the relationship value within the practice by offering additional options that are important to some patients. Bottom line, *we are all in the relationship business, and this model helps us serve more patients’ needs.*”

SPEAKING FROM EXPERIENCE

Dr. Roberts has implemented the *VIPS* business model with resounding success over the past 18 years. He is a general dentist providing oral surgery services to dental offices across the Metroplex. He offers an increasingly popular alternative for access to routine oral surgical procedures like wisdom tooth removal, extractions, implants and I.V. conscious sedation in the convenient, familiar environment of the patient’s home dental office.

Dr. Roberts and his team of trained assistants transport the necessary equipment needed for each procedure to the patient’s

home dental office, including vital signs monitors, an emergency kit, a defibrillator and necessary surgical instruments. The team sets up for the procedure, prepares any paperwork and visits with the family member who is responsible for driving the patient home. When the procedure is complete, the team escorts the patient safely to their car. Dr. Roberts provides post-operative care, including a follow up call to the patient at home. Over time, this model has proven to integrate seamlessly into existing dental practices and makes the host dentist’s practice even better.

As a *VIPS* dental associate, Dr. Roberts is an independent contractor with a separate malpractice insurance policy, as is typical for a full-time associate. The patient pays the host dentist’s office, which in turn contracts with Dr. Roberts and his team to provide in-house surgical services.

“The most elegant answer to a problem is usually very simple,” he explains. “Although this model strengthens the dentist’s practice, it’s not about making more money. It allows dentists to provide the kind of care some patients want, and it creates value. The host dentist can keep the scope of procedures within his or her zone of expertise and comfort, and the patient gets to stay in a chosen, familiar location with a trusted, familiar doctor.”

Why does the *Virtual Innovative Practice Systems* model work? Dr. Roberts describes his own experience:

Improves access to patient care. “Patients appreciate having access to a variety of services in the comfort of their

Similar advantages have made this service beneficial in **Dr. Dale Greer’s** practice. “I have complete trust and confidence in Dr. Roberts, and my comfort level transfers to our patients. It makes the transition seamless. They accept him as though he was a part of our staff, and they appreciate being treated here in our office. For anxious patients, in particular, it is easier to accept treatment when you know you won’t have to contend with the unknown that a new location, staff and dentist represents.”

Dr. Roberts offers an in-house continuing-education course to the host dentist and their dental team on management and treatment of medical emergencies. The title of his presentation is “A Common Sense Approach to the Prevention of and Preparation for Medical Emergencies in the Dental Office.” Dr. Roberts points out, “Presenting this course in the dentist’s office gives us a chance to run through mock-emergency scenarios using the dentist’s own emergency supplies and equipment.”

To set up an in-office CE program for medical emergencies, contact Dr. Roberts at (972) 404-1911 or e-mail dave@robertsdds.com.



Dr. Roberts offers medical emergency training to the staff and doctors of the host offices where he provides surgical care.

PHOTO BY RAY BRYANT, BRYANT STUDIOS

7 Habits of Highly Effective Dental Offices

Who are well prepared in preventing serious medical emergencies

Prevention

1. Medical History Review
2. Physician Consultation
3. Anxiety Management
4. Pain Control

Preparation

5. Continuing Education
6. Emergency Kits
7. Dental Office
Emergency Drills

Suggested Emergency Kit Supplies

Ammonia Aromatic Ampules
 Albuterol Inhaler
 Glucose Source
 Nitroglycerin Tabs
 Epi Pen x2
 Benadryl Prefilled Syringe
 325mg Aspirin
 Ambu Bag with Positive Pressure Oxygen
 Oxygen (Portable)
 Vital Signs Monitor
 AED (Automated External Defibrillator)



Dr. Roberts and his team from front to back: Andrea, Devon, Christina and Dorian. Long-term relationships with team members are essential to quality care. Dr. Roberts believes you can't take care of your patients without first taking care of your employees.

home dental office. After all, they chose it for its location, its décor, its financing policies, its wonderful staff and for the familiar, trusted provider with whom they have an established rapport. With this model, all those factors remain constant.”

Improves profitability. Dr. Roberts notes, “The *VIPS* model lowers overhead costs and increases your market share, without the owner dentists continually growing their personal portfolio of procedures. It allows you to reap the rewards of your rapport building and marketing efforts.”

Deepak Madhav, Business Manager for Dr. Anita Madhav, notes, “This innovative service helps our organization go above and beyond traditional patient care by allowing us to offer additional dental services in a familiar setting rather than referring patients to a different office, with a different staff, a different philosophy and a different commitment to their well-being; this referral may create anxiety and possibly noncompliance. The model markedly improves treatment acceptance. It is indeed a delight to be a part of a process that benefits the patient, the ‘associate-dentist’ as well as the host office. It’s a win-win-win situation.”

Improves the associate relationship. According to Dr. Roberts, “This relationship requires both practitioners to have and continually demonstrate mutual respect for the other’s time, energy and effort. While doctors look to the associateship to more efficiently utilize their facility space and to fill chairs, many associateship arrangements do not succeed in the long term or are burdensome to administer. With the *VIPS* model, the associate

Dr. Tim Robinson notes, “When I partner with Dr. Roberts, I am aware of every aspect of the procedure, from planning to post-op care. I review films with Dr. Roberts and share information before the patient’s appointment and communicate with him about any special medical needs they might have or about their particular fears. For select patients, who I know will be more comfortable here with me and my staff and would probably be reluctant to go through with recommended treatment elsewhere, this is a wonderful option.”

Dr. Fred Haight adds, “Many patients assume that their dentist provides every type of dental treatment. This service enables me to accommodate a broader range of needs here in my office and still focus on procedures that are within my comfort zone. Dr. Roberts removes impacted wisdom teeth and places implants on a daily basis. He also teaches classes on medical emergency prevention and treatments, so I feel very confident in his expertise. My patients trust that I would choose only the best care for them, and they find this service very convenient. And, because the service is billed through my office, patients encounter fewer surprises with billing or insurance coverage. Like a number of my colleagues, we don’t work with Dr. Roberts exclusively, but we certainly like being able to offer our patients this option among the other choices.”

According to **Chuck Meadris, D.D.S.**, “One thing I have noticed in the past 15 years in working with the *VIPS* model is the increased patient acceptance of treatment plans, in fact, it’s almost double. When I refer a patient out of the office for treatment, I find they follow through about 50% of the time. When I offer the in-house option through a Virtual Innovative Practice Systems model arrangement, this number approaches 90%. It’s just easier for some patients and that’s exactly why we like having this option available.”

VIPS founded 1992 is serving patients needs and currently has 3-4 clients and growing.

Virtual Innovative Practice Systems (VIPS) 1992 to Present

- Dallas 1992
- Dallas 2004
- Austin 2008
- Hartford 2009 (TBA)



Kristal and Dave Roberts lead a joy-filled family life, with son Andy and daughters Jesi, Sami and Dani.

is scheduled as needed. It's simpler to start the relationship and simpler to sever the relationship, if necessary."

Improves communication. "With the *Virtual Innovative Practice Systems Model*, a dentist can personally introduce patients to the new doctor. Patients are more open to extending their trust in light of this personal introduction and support. There is also regular face-to-face communication between dentists. Having the restorative dentist and surgeon standing side by side is especially helpful on combination procedures. Modern technology supports the model nicely — cell phones, Internet and digital X-rays all make communication easier and faster."

Improves convenience. "With less paperwork and fewer appointments, a dentist can use the *VIPS model* to his or her advantage and to the patient's advantage. Patients enjoy this added convenience, while dentists enjoy a simpler, more manageable schedule and the freedom to focus on patient care," Dr. Roberts explains.

According to Teresa Horvath, Office Manager in the orthodontic practice of Dr. Stephanie Smith-Crise, "This service is so convenient for our patients and parents. They know our staff and are used to dealing with us financially. The kids are used to coming to us and are comfortable here, so all the uncertainties of going to a new office are eliminated."

Joseph Loiacono II, of Wilson Grosenheider & Jacobs, LLP, notes, "One of the great things about the Texas State Board of Dental Examiners is that it has the intelligence and foresight to appreciate that innovative practices, such as these, can function within the scope of the board's rules and regulations."

Whether a dentist chooses to integrate the *Virtual Innovative Practice Systems* model into an existing practice or makes it their own, **Dr. Roberts emphasizes that his transformational business model**

is, first and foremost, about providing the kind of care patients want. He sees it not as a replacement for traditional referral patterns, but rather as a patient-friendly option that will complement and improve the existing paradigm within our profession.

He describes his formula for success through working together as "1+1=7," observing that through the synergy of an innovative partnership, the power and potential of two individuals is greatly amplified.

For more information, visit Dr. David Roberts' website at **www.robertsdds.com** or send an e-mail to him at: dave@robertsdds.com. You may also write him at: David L. Roberts, D.D.S., P.A., *Virtual Innovative Practice Systems* 7777 Forest Lane, Suite C-104, Dallas, TX 75230, or visit **www.vipsdental.com**. ■



DAVID L. ROBERTS
D.D.S. • P.A.

Virtual Innovative Practice Systems

7777 Forest Lane Suite C-104

Dallas, TX 75230

(972) 404-1911

dave@robertsdds.com | www.robertsdds.com