

Article 3

I know I put it down somewhere

There are degrees of untidiness. And some of us are more inclined to it than others

But I'm not here to judge. What I will say though, without equivocation, is that untidiness and clutter are noticeable in most practices and if they're noticeable to me then they're noticeable to patients. And, of course, working in an untidy environment has a detrimental effect on efficiency, perception and profitability.

When I am asked to design surgeries this is one of the key areas I address. Naturally I have to take account of the way my client likes to work, but having established that, then it's time to look at a modus operandi that optimises the way he or she does dentistry. The main focus for early discussion often centres on surgery work surfaces. I would say that at least 90% of surgeries use their work surfaces for some level of storage. At this point you may well be thinking, "this doesn't apply to me" and if there are no glove boxes, boxes of wipes, light curing machines, mobile phones or free samples on your work surfaces then you may well be right.

On the other hand, a critical and honest assessment of your surgery may suggest room for improvement. And de-cluttering does not simply relate to work surfaces.....it really is a question of considering where everything is located and then asking three questions:

1. Does whatever it is actually need to be in the surgery?
2. If it does could it be relocated to better advantage?
3. What impression does it give the patient? (here I'm thinking of things like sharps bins that really do need to be kept out sight)

Because I have worked with so many dentists and frequently had to overcome problems of limited space, thinking 'outside the box' has become, almost literally, commonplace for me. In a future article I will discuss how it is often possible to 'find' space where none seems to exist, but suffice it to say that decluttering goes hand in hand with space planning. It is remarkable just how much surgery time is saved and efficiency increased when everything has a logical place.