

## Sound advice

A few years ago I had an appointment with a Practice Principal to discuss a surgery refit. As I sat waiting outside his surgery, I realised I could hear, all too clearly, a conversation between him and his patient.

They weren't talking loudly, but that isn't the point. What a dentist and a patient say to each other should be confidential and the implications of a conversation being overheard can be serious. Just imagine, for example, if you're treating a nervous patient and your next patient is able to hear every word; or you're discussing exemption from charges; or medical history; or payment terms.....

I don't really need to spell it out. Every practice should take acoustics seriously and take prompt action if a problem exists. And that problem **will** exist if inappropriate materials are used for walls, ceilings, flooring, partitions and doors.

Glass particularly needs to be used with care. It's a very trendy material, but sealing glass doors is a real problem and glass does not absorb sound. Whenever I discuss surgery and/or practice projects with clients I invariably recommend an acoustic survey.

And here's why.....

Research undertaken in 2010 showed that noise in a dental surgery not only causes high levels of patient annoyance, anxiety and fear but will have a significant effect on decisions to undergo dental treatment. But that's not all. High noise levels in a practice can cause hearing loss and/or tinnitus amongst dental professionals. A sobering thought!! Keep in mind too that you and your colleagues may well have got used to sound levels that patients may not find acceptable.

Anyone involved in any design and build project for your practice needs to have an understanding of acoustics and materials appropriate for a 21<sup>st</sup> century practice. If you have any concerns, do please contact us. We're happy to help and advise.

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