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Alpha Dental: The Doctor Is In and Connected

Solo Practitioner Balances Patient Care and Business Management by Staying Connected

By Michael Kowalski, Washburn Communication, Inc.

The life of small business owner Dr. Eugene Kim, DMD, is a delicate juggling act. Like other small business owners, he balances managing a staff, maintaining patient records, and paying bills along with his number-one priority: caring for patients. A general dentist practicing in Phoenix, Arizona, Dr. Kim provides services that include endodontics, orthodontics, and cosmetic dentistry. He uses the latest procedures and technologies, including plasma-arc light for tooth-whitening—currently the safest and most powerful system available.

In dental school, Dr. Kim began using a handheld computer to help him find balance amid myriad priorities. Like many of his dental school peers, Dr. Kim downloaded medical and pharmacological references to his Windows Mobile powered device.

"Windows Mobile saved my back and helped get me through school," says Dr. Kim. "A handheld device is much lighter than several dictionary-sized, bound reference manuals. The electronic references are also easy and fast to search."

Today, when he is caring for a patient who is taking prescription medications, Dr. Kim consults the Epocrates pharmacological online database by using his Windows Mobile powered Verizon XV6700.

Dr. Kim checks to see if medications the patient is taking have side effects related to a treatment he may provide or medications he may prescribe.

"It's absolutely essential and very convenient; the medication database is right in my pocket," enthuses Dr. Kim. The Epocrates reference updates either when Dr. Kim connects wirelessly or when he places the Windows Mobile powered device in a cradle connected to his PC.

How do his patients react when he pulls out a handheld computer? Kim says, "I sometimes jokingly tell my patient that I need to consult my 'other brain.' I think my patients like the high-tech device; it shows that I'm using the latest technology and prescription information to look out for their well being."

Balanced Patient Care and Business

Like many other small business owners, Dr. Kim feels that much of the success of the practice depends on him, and that's why he likes using a Windows Mobile powered device to help him balance patient care with business management tasks and his personal life.

Dr. Kim uses Microsoft Office Outlook Mobile to organize his busy life and keep up with e-mail no matter where he happens to be. Kim remarks, "Having everything immediately available on the mobile device is great. It ensures that I'm always up-to-date."

Reminders and Tasks in Outlook Mobile help Dr. Kim manage his To Do List and deadlines—for example, paying bills, making a supply shopping list, or remembering an appointment with a supplier or vendor.

"My Windows Mobile device is very convenient. I don't have to carry a bunch of things: a pad of paper, a pen, or even a briefcase," remarks Kim. "It's one device, with everything on it."

Because Windows Mobile includes mobile versions of familiar programs, such as Microsoft Office Excel Mobile spreadsheet program and Microsoft Office Word Mobile word processing software, Dr. Kim can squeeze more out of his spare moments. He can handle business management tasks (such as payroll and accounting) from wherever he happens to be—for example, while he's waiting to see his own dentist.

"I use an Office Excel spreadsheet that has built-in calculators for tax, social security, and other deductions. I'm often on the run, and I like being able to do everything on the device."

Dentistry with a Personal Touch

Dr. Kim emphasizes a personal touch and, as the sole practitioner in his office, he must stay available to patients and his three staff.

"I may be off relaxing, but I know that a patient who is recovering from surgery may need to call me or even be seen in my office in an emergency," says Kim. "I don't have to wonder how they are doing or wait for an answering service to call me. Patients can e-mail or call me directly, and I can give them care right away. The same applies to my staff: they can contact me if they're sick or running late. I find it reassuring to be always connected. Carrying my Windows Mobile device, I worry less about what might be going on. I'm always 'in the know,' and connected—the doctor is always in," says Kim.

About the Author



Michael Kowalski is a Senior Writer at Washburn Communication, Inc., where he enjoys helping clients market their mobility products to small business, the mid-market, and enterprise. "Today, people can connect from almost anywhere—and I do. The world is my office."

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