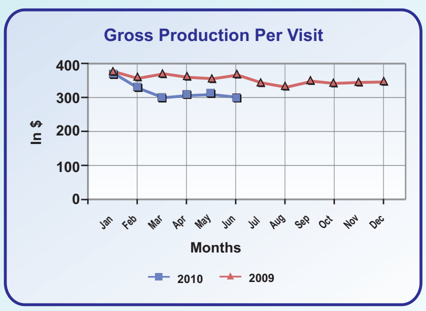
Digital Dental Benchmarking:

What do the numbers say?

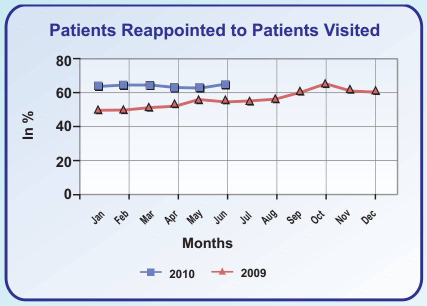
Vijay Sikka,
President and Chief Executive Officer, Sikka Software Corporation

By combining the capabilities of today's in-practice computer technology with an understanding of current practice management tools and techniques, it is now possible to uncover and highlight the key areas electronically where you can **"recover profitability"** in your practice. Then all it takes is an emphasis on certain key aspects and a sharp focus on simple, proven strategies to deliver truly measurable results.

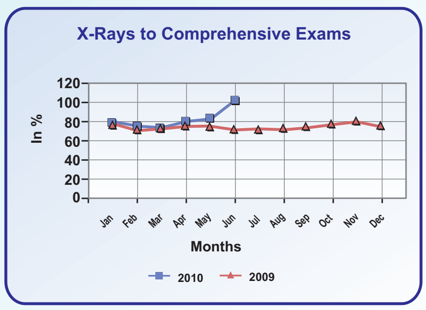
Sikka Software Corporation is currently tracking hundreds of business and clinical variables in real time at over 6,400 opt-in dental practices (including many in Canada). In this article, we will outline what real time, overall trends are telling us about the treatments dentists are presenting, recall effectiveness, production per visit, and the production of dentists and hygienists. You will also see, by viewing the charts presented, how 2010 has been showing some mixed signs versus the same time period in 2009. Please Note: the data presented in this article is in summary form (i.e., individual practices are never identified) and covers the period through June 7 2010. More recent data can be requested by going to www.nationaltrends.sikkasoft.com, our real time national trends website (NOTE: Signup is free. Just follow the instructions provided on the site).



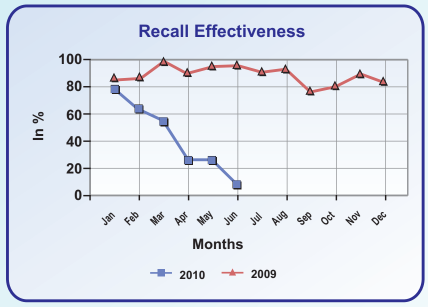
Overall, the results we are seeing have been very interesting for the year 2010 as the following chart illustrates. Patient gross production per visit has been steadily declining in 2010 to date and has now reached $300 average value - tracking approximately $75 below the 2009 numbers. This may be an indication of a weaker treatment acceptance by dental patients and/or a lack of financial resources.



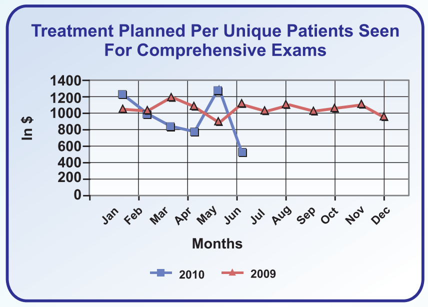
However, dental practices are stepping up their reappointment efforts in 2010 with the credit going to the front office and scheduling teams. 2010 has seen consistently higher patients reappointment volumes, as compared to patients visits, versus the same time frame in 2009.



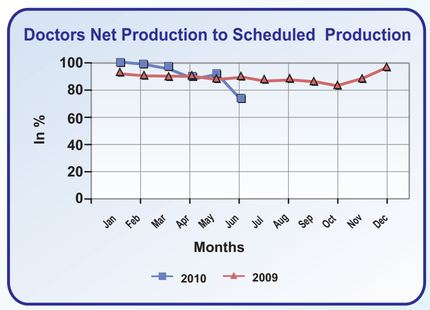
The number of "X-rays completed versus Comprehensive Exams" provides additional corroboration that practices are doing everything they can to increase treatments diagnosed. After seeing nearly identical levels of X-rays completed to the numbers of Comprehensive Exams between 2009 and 2010 up until the month of April, May and June 2010 seem to be breaking away and increasing, actually accelerating higher versus 2009 results.



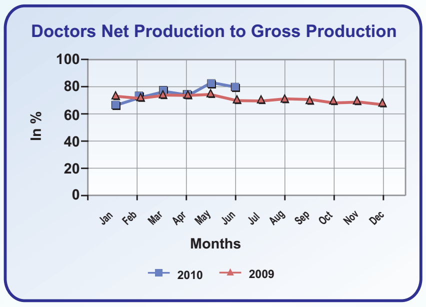
However, Recall Effectiveness[1] is actually showing a sharp drop in 2010 versus 2009. This is very concerning, so lets look into it in a little more detail by considering other key variables in the practice.



In terms of "Treatment Planned Per Unique Patients Seen For Comprehensive Exams", after charting a nice increase in January 2010 as compared to 2009, only May has witnessed similar higher treatment planned volumes. The rest of the months in 2010 have tracked well below their corresponding monthly 2009 levels.



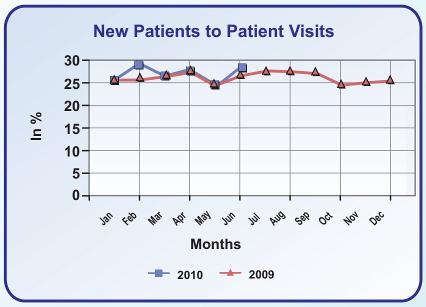
Doctors "Net Production to Scheduled Production" was tracking near 100% during the first quarter of 2010 and was actually higher than in 2009. Unfortunately, in the second quarter, this has lost a little steam and dropped to about the levels of 2009. The dip in the month of June for 2010 should be ignored in this case because it does not reflect a complete month's data.



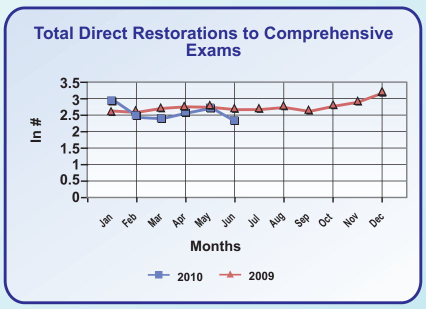
The interesting story is in the Doctors Net Production to Doctors Gross Production. The increase in 2010 indicates that providers are not handing out too many discounts and tracked practices are getting better in more accurately managing net production.

New Patients to Patient Visits

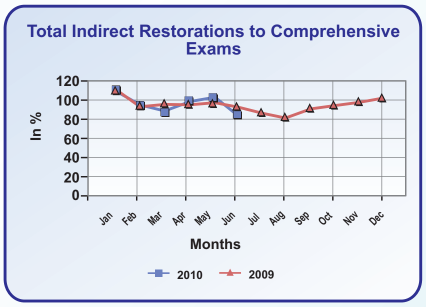
Here is perhaps the best news of all. There has been an increase in new patient activity!



Compared to the new patient numbers from 2009, 2010 is improving. February saw the highest number of new patients for the year to date and June 2010 promises to be even better.

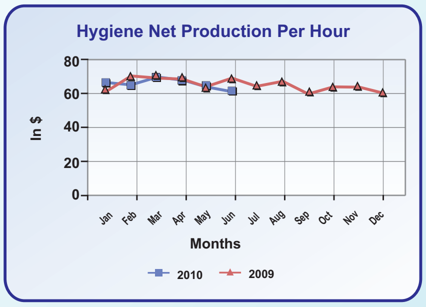


Direct restorations are generally insurance paid and are running below 2009 numbers. This indicates less of them are now being done or billed throughout the year. This could indicate a potential problem in collections in the coming months.

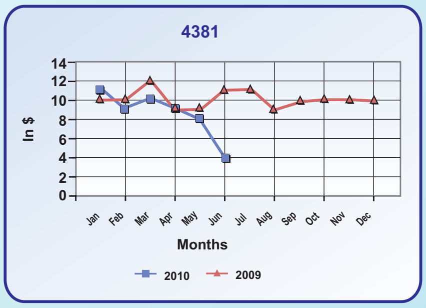


The number of indirect restorations completed as a percentage of comprehensive exams are tracking fairly steady to date in 2010 as compared to 2009.

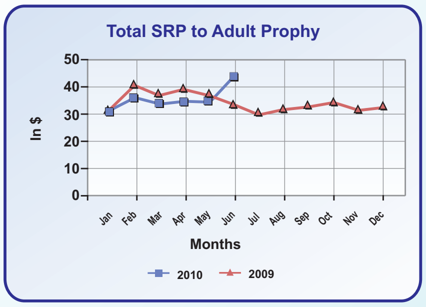
The Hygiene Story



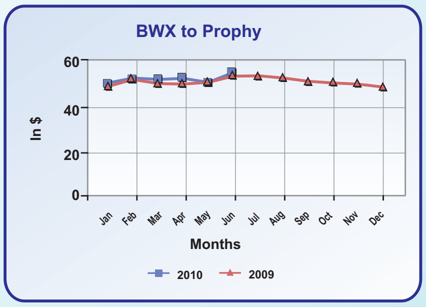
There is mixed news on this front. Hygiene net production per hour is flat in 2010 and above $60 per hour. This is a similar result to what we saw in 2009. However, that is good news considering the earlier discussion on drop in the recall effectiveness.



On the other hand, locally Applied Antimicrobials (e.g., Arestin® and others) are losing momentum in the first half of 2010.



However, the SRPs to Prophy ratio in adults, that had trailed in the first quarter of 2010 compared to 2009, is now making a comeback.



Bite Wing X-rays to Prophy ratio is tracking at the same level as 2009 numbers and is lower than 2008 numbers.

Lets keep our fingers crossed and hope some of the negative trends turn around. We will keep an eye out for more optimistic signs in the upcoming summer months and report back to you.

[1] Recalls are defined as the number of patients who had D0120 and D0120.1 procedures performed on them in last 6 months. For Canadian practices, equivalent CDA (Canadian Dental Association) codes are used. Recalls Potential: Number of patients who had D0120 or D0150 procedures performed on them in the last 6 month excluding current month. Recall Effectiveness: (Recalls / Recall Potential) x 100

Editors Note: Sikka Software has a series of articles available on a variety of practice management issues including fee optimization, patient demographics analysis, and patient reactivations. For readers who would like to receive these other articles, please email them at benchmarking@sikkasoft.com.

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