

## THIS MONTH: QUALITY MANAGEMENT

IN MODERN business, quality management systems review and development is essential to ensure business success, writes Alison Ryan.

As many consultants will know, it is very difficult to truly understand the quality of service you are providing to your patients, and by this I do not just mean your clinical service.

One of the great challenges in private practice is the lack of quality data for either clinical or administrative performance. With a bit of research, it soon becomes apparent that things are not necessarily what they seem.

I'll focus here on administrative performance, as clinical performance is clearly your own professional responsibility.

Consider the questions below. You may want to ask your patients

these questions face-to-face, or provide a small confidential questionnaire for them to get the honest response that will really make a difference.

- How many patients call and do not get through to your secretary?
- Would a patient rather call back or leave a message?
- Are patients happy to leave an answer phone message?
- How quickly does a patient expect their call to be answered?

### Honest appraisal

From this data you can get an honest appraisal of how your practice is being run in the eyes of your patients.

Not only will you get a general overview, you will also be able to highlight specific areas of strength, or indeed weaknesses,

that need to be addressed and worked on.

Studying our own data, it is clear to us that patients would rather call back than leave a message, but ideally would rather speak to someone there and then who can answer their query.

Your patients may have different expectations, but it pays to find out what they are.

The very fact that you are asking your patients for their feedback shows that you are committed to them and committed to quality – never a bad thing, in anyone's eyes.

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