work also conveys the message of favoritism and encourages a sense of exclusivity among those who see themselves as part of the dentist’s social circle. Cliques often materialize from a basic lack of understanding and system breakdowns. They can be particularly problematic in practices lacking job descriptions and systems of employee accountability. Consider your practice, do you have a team that clicks or a staff that cliques?

Pay attention to the clique cues:

- Critical decisions are being made or pushed by a select few and not input from others.
- Team members are complaining that their views don’t matter or they are shutting down and refusing to offer input.
- Information is not readily shared unless employees are directed to do so.
- Certain staff members are openly cool to others.
- Whisper campaigns seem to be more prevalent than direct methods.
- Staff members openly exclude others in social or professional activities.

An appreciation of diverse personalities, clearly defined job descriptions and maintaining basic office systems can all significantly reduce tensions among staff and fuel an environment of cohesion rather than division.

Take these steps to break down staff cliques and build a team that clicks.

Recognize that individual personalities can and do make a significant difference in how individuals react to one another. Invest a small amount of time and resources in personality testing. Staff members who understand the personalities of their colleagues, including the dentist, are much better prepared to work with them effectively. The Keirsey Temperament Sorter Test found in the book, Please Understand Me, by David Keirsey is an excellent tool to use.

Clearly define job responsibilities. With job descriptions, team members understand their role on the team. Moreover, they recognize who is responsible and accountable for which systems.

Hold regular staff meetings to address issues that arise in the practice. Dynamic teams are going to have disagreements; it’s fundamental to growth and the pursuit of excellence. Encourage staff to work together to resolve issues and address matters that they feel should be addressed.

Create an environment that encourages teamwork. For example, if appointment failures are wreaking havoc on your day, discuss the matter in a staff meeting and urge input and ideas from across the staff.

Then assign two or three employees to develop a strategy to address the problem. Be sure that the “task force” crosses “clique lines.”

Insist that clear information be shared among the team — specifically between “the front” and “the back” office. For example, hold a brief staff huddle daily to make sure that the front desk staff know exactly where to place emergency patients and ensure there are no surprises. Front desk staff necessary details on the time required for procedures and charges associated with those procedures so that they can dismiss patients efficiently.

Establish clear standards for office behavior and policies and spell them out in an employee handbook or policy manual. Then follow those policies. If you routinely make exceptions, you send the message that the policies are irrelevant and everyone can simply do their own thing without regard for how it will affect patients, the team or the practice.

Don’t look the other way. If an employee is engaging in negative behaviors that are potentially damaging, don’t ignore it. Reward team work and make an effort to acknowledge the success and positive con tribution of every employee. Doing so will promote a team that clicks rather than a staff divided by cliques.

Pay attention to the lines of demarcation that may be drawn in your office and take steps to erase them promptly. Those quietly warring factions are chiseling away at your practice infrastructure and subtly undermining your effort to establish a practice that is built on excellence.

The Florida National Dental Convention (FNDC) will be held June 9–11 at the Gaylord Palms Resort & Convention Center in Orlando. FNDC2011 boosts a strong slate of speakers focusing on the dentist’s role in a patient’s health.

The 2011 theme, Dentistry—Gateway to Good Health, highlights the role in a patient’s health. The dental office with its established recall and check-up systems is perfectly poised to monitor a patient’s overall wellbeing.

This year’s speakers and course offerings will challenge you as you build your expertise in standard dental procedures as well as the latest techniques.

In addition, this year you will find the traditional half-day lecture courses as well as hands-on workshops and the highly sought after mini-residencies. This year is offering mini-residencies in endodontics and implants.

Dr. Sam Dorn and Ken Zackery return with their intensive endodontic and implant review. They offer input and ideas from across the staff.

As always, the scientific program at FNDC2011 is filled with renowned clinicians and keynotes supporting the latest in dentistry. Visit www.floridadentalconvention.com for the full listing of speakers and courses.

In addition to the scientific program, FNDC2011 boasts one of the largest exhibit halls filled with companies displaying the latest, most innovative products, showing off advances in dental technologies. Nearly 350 industry-leading exhibitors will share their knowledge and expertise with attendees. The exhibit hall will be open all three days of the meeting.

Another benefit of attending FNDC2011 is the networking opportunities. Throughout the meeting, there are many opportunities to reconnect with old friends and make new ones. From the Welcome Reception to the Party in Paradise, networking is supporting the latest in dentistry. FNDC2011 will be held at the beautiful Gaylord Palms Resort and Convention Center in Orlando. This hotel’s signature atriums create three Florida environments, immersing you in the sights and sounds that make the Sunshine State a top vacation destination.

This luxurious hotel boasts excellent restaurants, dynamic on-site recreation, a 4,000 square foot fitness center, two pools and the breathtaking Relache Spa.

Gaylord Palms is conveniently located in the heart of Central Florida and is near dozens of spots for theme parks and local attractions, including Walt Disney World® theme parks, SeaWorld® Discovery Cove and Universal Orlando. Most attractions are located within several minutes from Gaylord Palms.

Complimentary scheduled shuttle bus service is available from the hotel to the Disney theme parks, Shuttles to SeaWorld, Universal Orlando and Wet-n-Wild are available through the Hotel Concierge.

For special theme park ticket and information on other area attractions, go to the general information directory or check the website, www.floridadentalconvention.com.

There is no better place to get your C.E credits and network with your peers than at FNDC2011. Visit www.floridadentalconvention.com to see the full schedule of events and to register to attend.

Sally Mckenzie is CEO of Mckenzie Management, which provides success-proven management solutions to dental practitioners nationwide. She is editor of The Dentist’s Network newsletter at www.thedentistsnetwork.net. She is a member of the e-Management newsletter from www.mckenzie mgm.com; and The New Dentist magazine, www.thenewdentist.com. She can be reached at (877) 777-6151 or sallymck @mckenziemgmt.com.