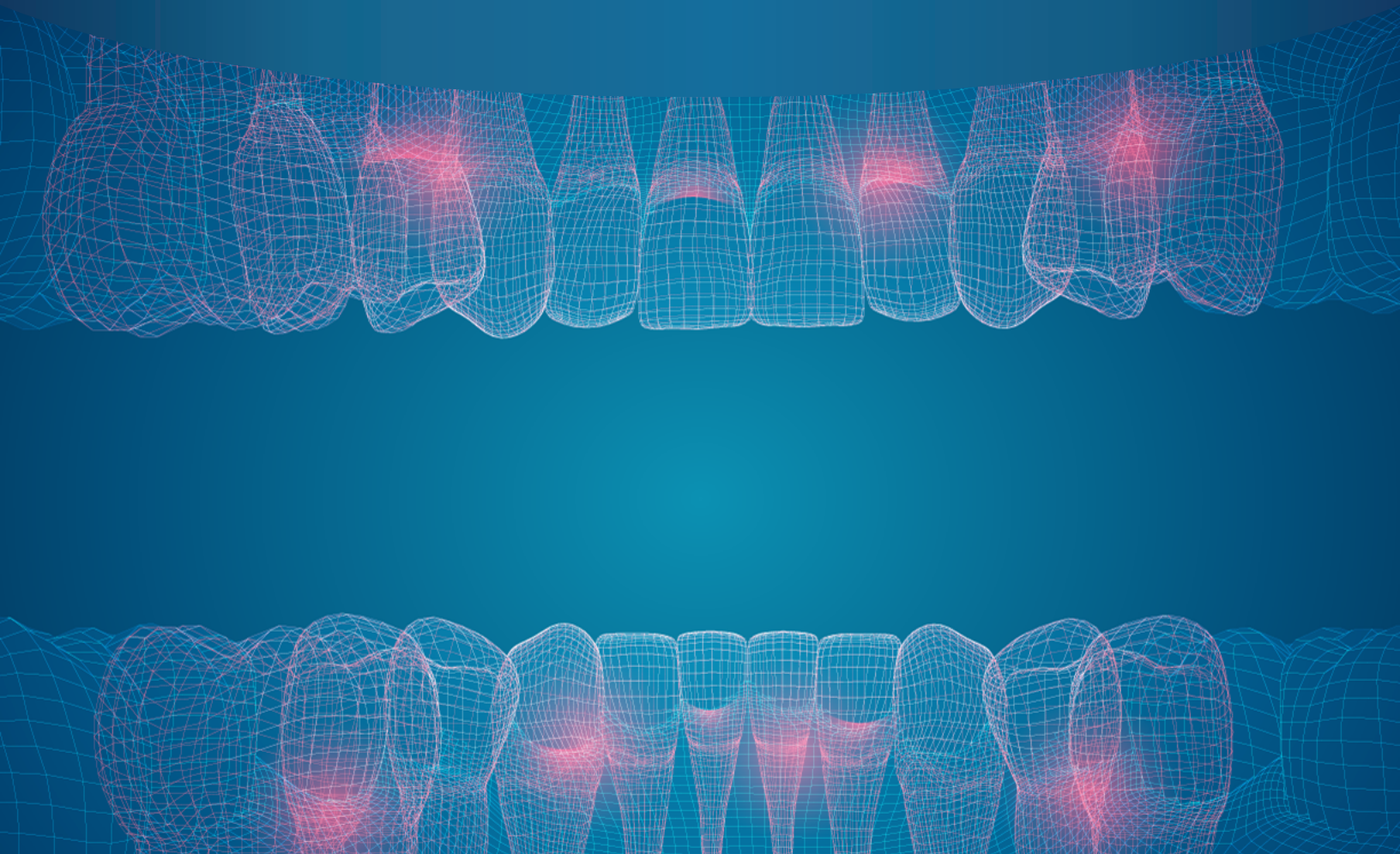




# Mitigating Practice Liability Exposure with Precision Treatment Planning and Diagnoses



PreXion recently surveyed dentists and dental specialists across the United States to determine how the industry is managing treatment planning and diagnostics as related to practice liability management. It's no surprise that all your peers who participated in this study aligned on the fact that treatment planning is critical to achieving successful outcomes for patients.

**When assessing the potential risks and benefits of a treatment plan, respondents considered these factors:**

- 50%** Patient's overall health and oral health condition
- 46%** Alignment with the patient on treatment objectives
- 38%** Treatment complexity
- 46%** Long-term prognosis of the proposed treatment
- 27%** Patient compliance with past dental care
- 23%** Potential complications

That's a lot to navigate for a single patient case, let alone multiple active treatment plans within a practice at any one time. This eBook will provide tips and tools from your peers on how to navigate these risks.

**When asked about the most common challenges your peers face when creating treatment plans for complex dental cases, survey respondents noted these obstacles:**

- 65%** Educating patients on potential outcomes
- 62%** Achieving reasonable rates of treatment acceptance
- 46%** Supporting patients in overcoming fear of treatment
- 31%** Identifying potential treatment opportunities
- 31%** Supporting patients in navigating how to pay for treatment

In this eBook, you also will uncover data from your peers in dentistry on practical ways to overcome these obstacles as well as education on these learning objectives:

- Achieving Reasonable Rates of Treatment Acceptance
- Building Confidence in Accurately Diagnosing Dental Conditions
- Navigating Patient-Doctor Disagreement in Treatment Planning
- Handling Patient Emergencies When Consent Is Not Possible
- Overcoming Barriers to Implementing Evidence-Based Treatment Planning
- Opportunities to Improve Treatment Planning, Diagnosing and Liability Management

Let's get started.

# Achieving Reasonable Rates of Treatment Acceptance

Most of our study respondents, 77%, indicated sometimes facing challenges in obtaining acceptance from patients for complex treatment plans, while 19% reported experiencing such challenges often. Only a small percentage, 4%, stated that they never encountered difficulties in obtaining acceptance from patients for complex treatment plans.

How to overcome these challenges? Your peers took these approaches listed in order of majority to minority responses in our study:

## Use non-technical language.

Avoid clinical dental terminology in favor of explaining treatment options in simple language to ensure patients fully comprehend the proposed plan. This approach fosters clear communication, reduces confusion and empowers patients to make informed decisions about their oral health.

## Ask open-ended questions.

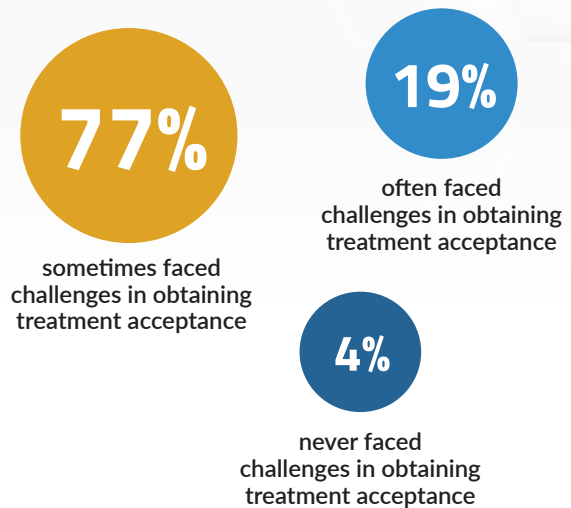
By encouraging patients to share their thoughts, preferences and expectations, you can gain valuable insights and tailor a plan to meet individual needs. This patient-centered approach helps build a collaborative decision-making process.

## Offer financial options.

Extend flexible payment plans, dental benefits guidance or alternative financing options to alleviate payment concerns and make complex treatment plans more accessible. In our survey, when asked about the frequency of encountering situations where treatment planning or diagnosing challenges were influenced by the patient's financial considerations, a significant majority (69%) indicated that they frequently face challenges influenced by a patient's financial circumstances and a notable portion of respondents (27%) reported encountering such situations sometimes.

## Share visual aids.

Visual presentations are a valuable approach to enhance patient understanding of complex treatment plans. You can visually illustrate the proposed procedures, potential outcomes and the overall treatment process to enhance patient comprehension, facilitate effective communication and promote treatment plan acceptance.



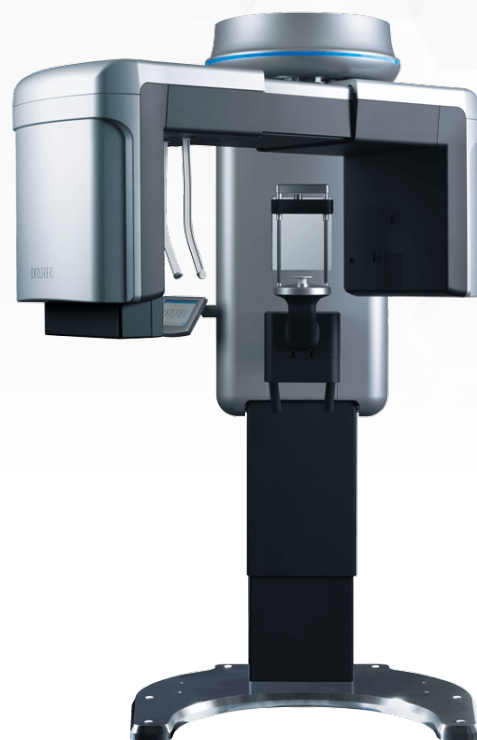
## Provide testimonials/case studies.

Success stories and real-life examples of similar cases showcase your expertise, build credibility and increase patient confidence in the proposed plan.

## Present visual documentation of the case.

Use of intraoral camera images, digital X-rays, or [CBCT 3D imaging](#) is an extremely effective approach to obtaining acceptance from patients for treatment plans. By showcasing visual evidence, you can provide a tangible understanding of the patient's oral condition and the proposed treatment, helping them to visualize both issues and treatment benefits, thereby increasing their likelihood of accepting the plan.

To achieve reasonable rates of treatment acceptance, survey respondents explored more deeply how to build confidence in accurately diagnosing dental conditions. Read on to uncover their approaches.



PreXion Explorer PRO  
CBCT

# Building Confidence in Accurately Diagnosing Dental Conditions

Accurately diagnosing dental pathology ensures effective treatment planning, contributes to positive patient outcomes and satisfaction and mitigates risk for the practice owner. Dentists and specialists must continually assess their confidence level in accurate diagnosis and leverage appropriate tools and technologies to enhance diagnostic capability.

When asked about their confidence level in accurately diagnosing dental conditions, 50% of our respondents reported feeling very confident, while the remaining 50% expressed feeling just somewhat confident. Our study further explored confidence level in using current technology for diagnosing dental conditions. While a significant percentage of respondents, 46%, reported feeling very confident in their practice's current technology, the other 53% expressed feeling only somewhat confident. What is the best way to boost confidence in those feeling somewhat confident?

**46%**

of respondents reported feeling very confident in their practice's current technology.

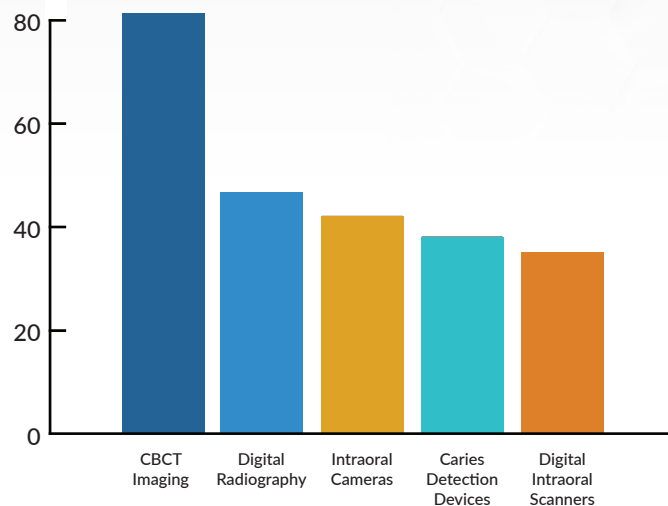


**53%**

of respondents reported feeling somewhat confident in their practice's current technology.

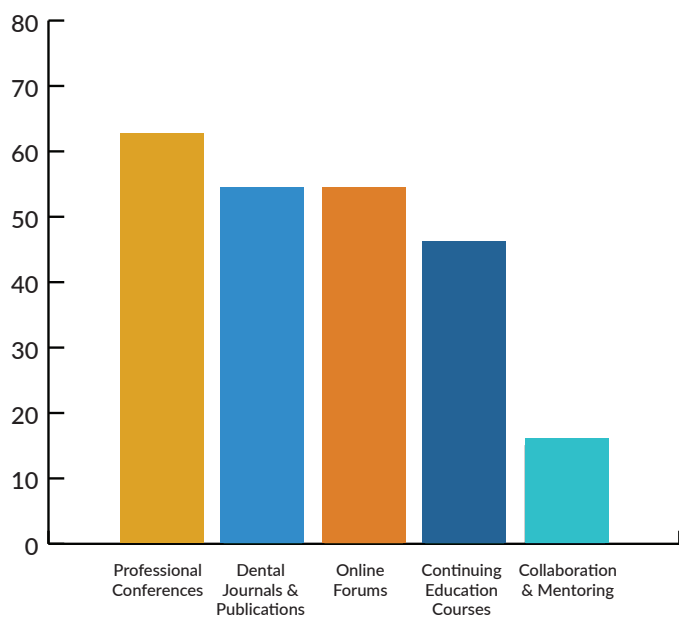
## Make the Most of Current Tools and Technology

We also asked about the tools and technologies currently used most frequently for diagnosing dental problems. The findings revealed that the most frequently utilized diagnostic tools include [cone beam computed tomography \(CBCT\) 3D imaging](#), with a substantial 81% of respondents relying on this technology. Digital radiography ranked as the second most used tool at 46%, followed by intraoral cameras at 42%. Caries detection devices and digital intraoral scanners were also utilized by 38% and 35% of the respondents, respectively. These technologies play a pivotal role in facilitating accurate diagnosis and effective treatment planning acceptance in dental practices, both of which can bolster confidence.



## Seek Education on the Latest Advancements.

According to our survey findings, a significant number of respondents employ various strategies to stay informed on the latest advancements in treatment planning and diagnosing techniques to further bolster confidence. Professional conferences and symposiums, utilized by 62% of respondents, offer insights into cutting-edge research and collaboration with many attendees. Dental journals and publications, favored by 54% of respondents, provide evidence-based content in a convenient format. Online forums and discussion groups, utilized by 54% of respondents, facilitate knowledge sharing. Continuing education courses, relied upon by 46% of respondents, provide structured learning opportunities on new technologies and techniques. Collaboration and mentoring, engaged in by 15% of respondents, foster professional growth. By embracing these avenues, clinicians continually seek to enhance their diagnostic accuracy and provide optimal patient care.



## Embrace the Future.

Among the emerging technologies and innovations, respondents identified intraoral cameras, virtual reality and [CBCT 3D imaging](#) as having the best potential to enhance treatment planning or diagnosing processes. These advancements provide dentists and specialists with valuable tools for improved visualization and accuracy in their assessments. Intraoral cameras allow for detailed examinations and better patient communication, while virtual reality offers an immersive experiences that aids in treatment planning and patient education. CBCT 3D imaging provides comprehensive and detailed images for earlier and more precise diagnoses. Although artificial intelligence and augmented reality received lower response percentages, the survey respondents did indicate they hold promise for future advancements in dentistry.

What if there is a patient-doctor disagreement in treatment planning? Your peers shared insights on how to navigate that tricky ground as well.

## Trends in Navigating Patient-Doctor Disagreement in Treatment Planning

Among our study respondents, 69% reported sometimes having cases where there is a disagreement between doctor and patient regarding the proposed treatment plan, while 23% often experienced such disagreements. When faced with a disagreement regarding a proposed treatment plan, three trends emerged in our study in how dental professionals handle such situations:

### 1. Open communication and patient education:

Dentists emphasized the importance of maintaining open communication and transparency throughout the process. They aim to educate their patients about the proposed treatment plan and the underlying reasons behind it. By providing clear explanations and addressing any concerns, dentists seek to ensure that patients are well-informed and understand the potential benefits of the recommended course of action.

### 2. Respecting patient autonomy and collaboration:

A dentist practicing in the Miami-Dade area of Florida suggested, “Ultimately, the decision [to proceed with treatment] should be made collaboratively with the patient’s best interest in mind.” Dentists across the study acknowledged the significance of respecting the patient’s autonomy and right to make decisions about their own healthcare. They expressed a collaborative approach, highlighting the need for shared decision-making. Dentists discussed the importance of seeking input from patients, listening to their concerns and involving them in the treatment planning process to reach a mutually agreeable solution.



“Ultimately, the decision [to proceed with treatment] should be made collaboratively with the patient’s best interest in mind.”

### 3. Re-evaluation and alternative options:

Dentists recognized the need to re-evaluate the proposed treatment plan and adjust if necessary. They emphasized the importance of considering alternative options and discussing the pros and cons of each with the patient. Dentists mentioned seeking input from other healthcare professionals, providing professional advice and, in some cases, referring the patient to another specialist who may be better suited to address a particular patient's specific needs.

A survey respondent in private practice in Queens, New York, outlined this step-by-step process for aligning with patients on treatment acceptance:

1. Determine the patient's goals for treatment
2. Identify any objections the patient may have before proceeding with treatment (most of the time it's financial fear or fear of pain)
3. Overcome objections by sharing educational tools with the patient, offering payment options and measures to be taken for pain-free treatment
4. Develop good rapport to help the patient feel relaxed and confident in your abilities

Beyond standard treatment planning, emergency cases can add complexities to case acceptance and consent. Read on to discover how your peers approach emergencies while mitigating risk to the practice.

## Trends in Handling Patient Emergencies When Consent Is Not Possible

A participant in our study in practice in New York, New York, rightly said, "Informed consent is important, but in emergency situations, we must act quickly to save the patient's life. We communicate with family members or guardians if possible." Dentists we surveyed provided several approaches to handling an emergency in which a patient's oral health condition requires immediate attention but obtaining their consent is not possible. Here are three trends that emerged in our study:

### 1. Prioritize patient health.

Respondents unanimously emphasized the importance of prioritizing the patient's health and well-being in emergency situations. They acknowledged the need to provide necessary treatment to stabilize the patient's condition and ensure their safety. This commitment to immediate action reflects the primary concern of dental professionals to preserve and protect the lives of their patients.

## 2. Communicate and document.

Dentists and specialists in our study stressed the significance of effective communication and meticulous documentation in handling emergency cases without obtaining consent. They highlighted the importance of contacting family members, significant others or designated emergency contacts to obtain consent whenever possible. Additionally, dentists recognized the need to clearly document the circumstances, treatment provided and reasons why consent could not be obtained. This emphasis on communication and documentation reflects the commitment to transparency and accountability in their decision-making process.



## 3. Consider ethical and legal considerations.

Survey takers also demonstrated a strong commitment to ethical and legal guidelines when making decisions in emergency situations. They acknowledged the complexity of balancing the patient's autonomy and rights with the urgency of the situation. Dentists and specialists mentioned following established protocols, involving hospital ethics committees when necessary and seeking legal advice, if needed. This trend highlights the conscientious approach taken by dental professionals to ensure they act within the boundaries of professional ethics and legal obligations.

Challenges to successful, ethical and legal treatment planning extend beyond emergency cases, of course. Continue to the next section to see what your peers identified as the most common barriers to implementing evidence-based treatment planning in the overall practice of dentistry.

# Trends in Barriers to Implementing Evidence-Based Treatment Planning

Dentists and specialists face several common barriers when it comes to implementing evidence-based treatment planning and diagnosing practices. Here are three prominent trends observed in the study:

### 1. Lack of access to up-to-date research:

Dentists frequently mentioned the challenge of limited access to up-to-date, high-quality evidence-based research. This barrier can hinder their ability to make informed treatment decisions and stay abreast of the latest advancements in dental care. The lack of readily available research resources can impede the implementation of evidence-based practices.



## 2. Limited resources and resistance to change:

Dentists highlighted the constraints imposed by limited resources, including funding, staffing and time. Insufficient resources can make it challenging to fully implement evidence-based treatment planning and diagnostic practices. Moreover, resistance to change and reluctance to adopt new practices were identified as significant barriers. Overcoming resistance and gaining buy-in from colleagues, staff and patients were mentioned as crucial challenges.

## 3. Complexity and interpretation of evidence:

Dentists acknowledged the complexity of research and difficulty in interpreting the evidence. They emphasized the need for adequate training and continuing education in evidence-based practices. The intricacies of some evidence-based practices, coupled with inconsistent or inadequate documentation, can hinder successful implementation. Additionally, patient comprehension and understanding their own issues were mentioned as barriers, making it challenging for them to accept the proposed treatment plan based on evidence.

How can dentists and specialists overcome these barriers? Read on to uncover how your peers answered that very line of questioning.

# Top 5 Opportunities for Improving Treatment Planning, Diagnosing and Liability Management

The study showed that 8% of your peers reported often encountering legal or liability issues related to their treatment planning or diagnosing practices, while another 46% mentioned sometimes experiencing such issues. When asked about how often they had to modify a treatment plan due to liability concerns, 23% of respondents reported doing so often, while 73% indicated that they sometimes had to modify the treatment plan for liability reasons.

46%

sometimes encountered legal or liability issues related to treatment planning

8%

often encountered legal or liability issues related to treatment planning

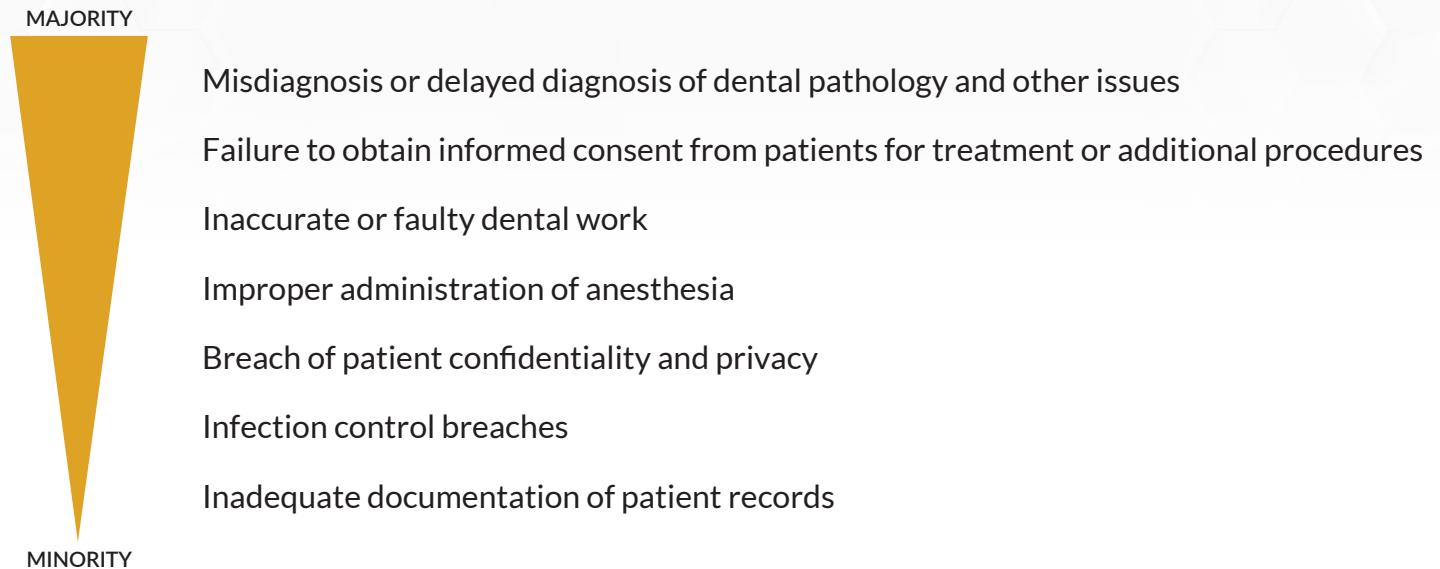
73%

sometimes had to modify the treatment plan for liability reasons

23%

often had to modify the treatment plan for liability reasons

The most significant liability risks for dentists and dental specialists in the current practice environment, as perceived by our survey respondents, listed in order of majority to minority response were:



How do dentists and specialists improve treatment planning and diagnoses, thereby mitigating liability exposure? The data revealed five major opportunities for improvement:

### 1. Integrate digital technology.

The integration of digital technology in treatment planning and diagnosing presents a significant opportunity for improvement. Advanced imaging techniques, such as cone beam computed tomography, can enhance diagnostic accuracy, leading to better treatment outcomes. Furthermore, the use of digital tools and software can streamline treatment planning processes, improving efficiency and precision.

### 2. Increase patient education and involvement.

Increasing patient education and involvement in their treatment planning can have a transformative impact on outcomes. By educating patients about their oral health conditions, treatment options and potential risks, dentists can empower patients to make informed decisions and actively participate in their own care. This approach can also improve treatment compliance and lead to better outcomes.

### 3. Embrace evidence-based practice.

Implementing evidence-based practice guidelines in dentistry is crucial for optimizing treatment planning and reducing liability risks. Dentists should stay updated with the latest research and incorporate evidence-based protocols into their practice. This approach ensures that treatment plans are based on the most current and clinically accepted processes, enhancing patient outcomes and reducing potential liabilities.

## 4. Offer collaborative care models.

One of the respondents, a dentist in Harris, Texas, rightly stated, “Dentistry can benefit from improved communication between healthcare providers to ensure comprehensive and accurate treatment planning.” Collaboration between dental professionals and other healthcare providers, such as medical professionals, presents an opportunity for more comprehensive patient care. By working together and considering the interplay between oral health and systemic conditions, a holistic approach can be adopted, often leading to improved patient outcomes. Collaborative care models also facilitate better communication and information exchange between healthcare professionals, improving diagnosis and treatment planning.

## 5. Improve communication and documentation.

Beyond just in emergency cases as previously addressed, effective communication with patients and proper documentation are crucial for liability management in dentistry. Dentists should ensure clear and transparent communication with patients, discussing potential risks, benefits and alternatives to treatment. Informed consent should be obtained and all interactions and decisions should be well-documented. This approach helps mitigate liability risk and enhances patient safety and satisfaction.

These opportunities have the potential to improve patient outcomes, enhance patient experiences and ensure the highest standard of care – plus mitigate liability exposure.

## Conclusion

Our survey shed light on the measures taken by dental professionals like you to minimize the risk of misdiagnosis or treatment complications. The findings emphasize the importance placed on receiving informed patient consent, with 46% of respondents indicating it as a key measure to minimize risk. A significant percentage of respondents, 42% and 50% respectively, emphasized the importance of thorough documentation of patient history and clinical examination as essential steps in mitigating risk. The utilization of dental technology emerged as a prominent strategy to enhance diagnostic accuracy, and minimize risks and improve treatment outcomes, with most respondents, 54%, recognizing the value of using tools such as digital radiography, intraoral cameras and CBCT 3D imaging.

Another noteworthy risk-minimizing measure identified in the survey was multidisciplinary collaboration. A significant percentage of respondents, 62%, acknowledged the benefits of engaging in collaborative efforts with both specialists and other healthcare professionals. This allows for a more comprehensive assessment of a patient’s overall health and facilitates a holistic approach to treatment planning. By involving specialists from different disciplines, dental professionals can better understand the potential systemic implications on oral health and provide optimal care to their patients.

It is critical that dental professionals continually evaluate and update their risk management strategies. By adopting a proactive approach to risk management and embracing best practices, dental professionals can provide their patients with the highest standard of care while minimizing potential complications and legal concerns.

Above all, patients come first. In the words of a dentist practicing in Honolulu, Hawaii, “Embracing a patient-centered approach to care can lead to better treatment planning and outcomes and reduced liability risks.”



## Ready to increase case acceptance rates now?

**Enhance patient education and production with 3D cone beam computed tomography (CBCT) imaging.**

Yes, I want to schedule a demo with a PreXion 3D cone beam specialist so I can get:

- ✓ A clear understanding of how easier-to-read images give way to improved diagnostic capabilities, increased revenue and easier treatment planning
- ✓ Clarity on how to angle and zoom in on problem areas to help patients visualize their case and treatment
- ✓ Insight into exactly how a fully three-dimensional rendering of a patient's dentition with pristine quality can encourage quicker treatment acceptance
- ✓ A comparison of the attributes of various 3D CBCT scanners and how each stacks up in increasing practice production

**GET MY DEMO SCHEDULED**