



Maximize the ROI of Your CE

Does it matter which CE courses you take? Of course—but not in the way you’re probably thinking.

Business is, in three words, *supply and demand* and yet I see a lot of dentists who spend their CE budgets—all their time, all their money—on things that their patients never asked for.

Some dentists choose to focus their CE efforts on sleep apnea, TMD or cosmetic dentistry. These are important topics, but often represent a small percentage of your practice productivity. That doesn’t make a lot of sense to me. If you have a passion for these types of cases it is a worthwhile pursuit, but if you are focused on rapid growth, focus your energy on where the money is.

I mean, I get it if it’s fun—I took those types of courses at one time, too!—but this is *especially* true for newer dentists who’ve got \$400,000 in student loans. Look at the average income for dentists—those in general practice make \$174,000 but endodontists make \$325,000.

You might not like doing molar endo, but do you like sending a \$1,000 molar to the endodontist every week, while you’re trying to make payments on your \$400,000 in student loans? Oral surgeons make an average of \$413,000 a year—that’s more than the average dental student graduate’s total indebtedness from dental school and undergrad—and yet you say you don’t like pulling wisdom teeth? Orthodontics: \$301,000. Pediatric dentistry: \$347,000. Periodontics: \$257,000.

When you say you’re going to take

CE, I will tell you a million, trillion, *gazillion* times: Take courses on root canals, extractions and surgery. That’s how you pay back your student loans the fastest.

Payback is a ... challenge

The hardest thing about life is getting through it, and when we die we’re all going to live in the same-sized house six feet underground, so it doesn’t matter, but I’ll tell you what: Money is the answer ... what’s the question?

You decided to borrow other people’s money, at the tune of \$70,000–\$100,000 a year, so that you could become a dentist and start paying back the loan. You could have said, “I’m going to get out of school and I’m going to work for 10 years and save up enough cash to go to dental school,” but you didn’t. You wanted to do the OPM route—Other People’s Money—and now you’re sitting on \$400,000 in debt. What’s the quickest way to pay them off? The numbers show that the biggest money is made in oral surgery, at \$413,000 a year, then in endodontics.

After them: pediatric dentistry. We have a pediatric dental rock star right here in our backyard in Phoenix: Dr. Jeanette MacLean, Dentaltown’s newest editorial board member, did a couple of CE courses for us on silver diamine fluoride, and they’re some of our most-viewed online courses.

(Tangent: Don’t you dare try to tell me you don’t like working on children—you used to *be* a kid! I’ve flown a thousand times in airplanes to get to lectures,



by Howard Farran, DDS, MBA, publisher, *Dentaltown* magazine

"When you say you're going to take CE, I will tell you a million, trillion, gazillion times: Take courses on root canals, extractions and surgery. That's how you pay back your student loans the fastest."

and nothing makes me more upset than when some man's freaking out because there's a kid crying, and this grown adult keeps looking back, trying to glare at the child and the parents. How old were you when you were born? If a crying child really bothers you, buy some noise-canceling headphones, put in some damn music and turn on the speakers.)

If you decide you "don't like treating children," then you pass up the opportunity to earn some of that \$347,000 a year that pediatric dentists do. It's also really easy to be a unique selling proposition when a lot of pediatric dentists are still doing stainless steel crowns, but now there are white composite crowns that parents likely will prefer to use.

The bottom line: Life is an attitude, and your attitude determines your altitude. Your return on investment in CE comes down to what I discussed above, and not those cool-sounding but peripheral topics that don't translate into much income in your practice. ■

> See Howard Live!

Howard Farran, DDS, MBA, is an international speaker who has written books and dozens of articles. To schedule Howard to speak at your next national, state or local dental meeting, email rebecca@farranmedia.com.

2018

June
15

**Wyoming Dental Association
Annual Session**
Snow King Resort, Jackson Hole

Sept.
12

**State of New York 9th District
Dental Association**
Crowne Plaza, Suffern

Sept.
15

Ohio Dental Association Annual Session
Greater Columbus Convention Center

Sept.
21

Patterson Dental
Lamplighter Inn and Conference Center,
London, Ontario

Oct.
5

**14th annual MegaGen
International Symposium**
Mandalay Bay Convention Center,
Las Vegas, Nevada

Nov.
2

Harrisburg Area Dental Society
Radisson Penn Harris Convention Center,
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania



Do you agree with Howard? Weigh in online

Tell Dr. Howard Farran (and your fellow Townies) your opinion about CE: Are Howard's recommendations right-on, or do you think he's missed the mark about coursework? Share your thoughts in the message board under this article online at dentaltown.com/magazine.