As we celebrate National Pet Dental Health Month, it’s a good time to ask whether you merely squeeze dentistry into your schedule or consider it an incredible gift to your patients.

Eighty-five percent of our patients suffer from some form of dental disease, but, often, they can be relieved of the associated chronic infection and pain in just one visit. With continued prevention and treatment through regular dental checkups, follow-up visits, and cleanings, your patients can live more comfortable lives. For staff members, performing dental procedures can provide instant gratification by making a diseased area healthy again. You probably never tire of clients saying their pet is acting young again after a dental procedure.

If you’re not receiving this positive feedback at your clinic, it’s probably time to make a change. Are you willing to do this? National Pet Dental Health Month is a perfect time to start. You have an entire year to devote to this issue. Begin by answering the following questions:

- Why does your clinic perform dental cleanings?
- Why does your clinic perform dental extractions?
- If you perform dental procedures, could your skills improve, or are they fine as they are?
- Could your dental knowledge improve, or is it fine as is?
- What equipment do you need to improve how you perform dental procedures?
- Is your clinic’s care of dental patients below average, average, or above average?

All staff, including technicians, assistants, and even front desk and kennel personnel, should be involved in the plan to improve your clinic’s dentistry service. Have a staff meeting to develop a strategic plan that will keep you on task. Each goal needs a date for completion and a person assigned to ensure that the goal is completed. You can set goals for staff training and purchasing dental equipment, whether it’s a new scaling unit or dental x-ray machine.

Assessing and making changes can be humbling and challenging. Sharing the load and tackling a challenge together can turn your clinic’s staff into a team. This can make you a believer in your clinic’s vision and improve your patient care, whether it’s dentistry or any other service your clinic provides.

Happy National Pet Dental Health Month, everyone!