

# Climate change: How will it affect us?

Allan Weiner looks at how a dentist starting up practice can contribute to a better environment

The UK dental industry cannot be expected to exert a major influence on the economic welfare of entire overseas populations, in the areas of climate change and the husbanding of natural resources. However, we can reduce our personal contribution to global warming, and set an example to others for the greater good. While 'green' energy savings and other environmentally friendly measures can be applied to any type of premises, it's the area of new build in which the most dramatic impact can be achieved.

Historically, many dental practices were situated in the high street, and often in

buildings that date back to Victorian times. The legacy of these high street practices remains with us today, most of which represent conversions from domestic or other uses. In the last two decades, however, custom-built clinics, and other facilities often incorporating a range of healthcare disciplines, are becoming more and more popular.

There are huge advantages to custom-built dental facilities, in both commercial and environmental terms, as well as in ergonomics and the potential for improved patient care. The engagement of ambitious clinicians with a specialist developer invariably leads to an outcome which is guaranteed to be profitable as well as genuinely 'green.'

Purpose-built surgeries however, involve a considerable capital investment, usually beyond the scope of individual practitioners or even the local PCT. Funding is often provided by companies like CareCapital, which are specialist healthcare facility providers that after completion, lease back the completed project to 'partner tenants'

on a long term basis.

CareCapital, backed by substantial financial resources and with over 30 years experience in the market, is currently the only UK healthcare property developer focusing on the dental sector. It is at the forefront of progressing the proud tradition of UK dentistry to exploit the benefits of the digital age, while at the same time minimising its carbon footprint and environmental impact. Particularly concerned that its developments address the green agenda at every opportunity, CareCapital ensures both its existing and new medical and dental facilities are as energy saving as compatible with their efficiency and suitability for purpose.

New build ensures that the latest low maintenance, energy efficient and environmentally protective measures can be incorporated within the building itself, rather than simply 'bolted on' to an older, existing property. Typical design and architectural considerations involve maximising the use of natural light, insulation, double glazing, and the use of materials and building



methods which reduce energy demands during the course of construction.

Designs incorporating sun tubes are a relatively modern concept and particularly apt in low rise or twin storey developments, while open plan reception areas encourage ventilation in summer and disseminate heat widely in the colder months. In suitable locations, solar panels or wind turbines may provide a proportion of the practice's electricity requirements, and it is worth remembering that grants are sometimes available for existing businesses towards the cost of installing devices which exploit renewable energy sources. However, although these devices, once installed, reduce energy overheads for the indefinite future, the capital outlay involved may not be justified in every case. Principals are advised to do their sums carefully!

Fortunately there are many other ways to slim down the practice's carbon footprint, which do not require radical structural alterations or major financial investment.

Chief among these is switching off lights and electrical appliances when they are not in use. The simple, rigorously pursued habits of switching off unused lighting, and not leaving equipment on standby (sometimes throughout a working day without it once being needed), deliver significant energy as well as financial savings over time. It was recently calculated that the average domestic TV consumes £30 worth of electricity in standby mode over a period of 12 months; and prices have certainly risen since! The ideal solution is devising systems, which automatically switch off unused machines after a set duration. Other measures, such as conscientious recycling, car sharing or using public transport where feasible, bicycling or sometimes walking to work, are basic examples of how the individual can contribute.

Dentists' inspired by the changing face of dentistry, which has seen the profession become a highly competitive environment, are also striving to give their patients the pleasure of a spa-like experience. Without the space or environment necessary to incorporate such a dream, they will ultimately fail. Third party ownership of clinical premises will allow the dentist this dream of delivering the finest care in the finest surroundings, worthy of his or her talents, supported by efficient staff who have every reason to be proud of where they work and what they do.

More and more young dentists and established practitioners seeking to advance their careers or expand their clinical activi-

ties are turning to leasing as an alternative to outright practice purchase. Although leasing their premises has long been popular among healthcare professionals in Continental Europe and the US, in spite of its advantages it is a relatively recent phenomenon in Britain, where our culture has always favoured property ownership.

Dentistry is a lifetime career and the long term success of a practice depends on financial security and continuity of tenure. Creating a clinic is a multi-skilled and multi-faceted operation, demanding specialist knowledge at every turn, which even the worldliest dentist is unlikely to possess. Forming an alliance with a commercially adept partner accustomed to the bureaucracy attendant on such a project, and with access to the required funds, is the logical first step.

The Northern Rock affair has compromised the climate for mortgage lending and few commentators anticipate any improvement in the near future, so the concept of 'Leaseback' of clinical premises brings yet more advantages. Quite apart from eliminating the universally acknowledged stress attendant on any property purchase, engaging in a long term relationship with a leasing partner brings the expertise, financial clout and in the case of CareCapital, specialist knowledge of the needs of a dental practice, to the fingertips of the aspiring dentists. At the same time, they may influence the design of their workplace at the planning stage to ensure it satisfies their personal requirements.

Offering a turn-key completion, flexible leases, and developments which take into account future expansion or possible changes in treatment emphasis, CareCapital tenants can be confident of pursuing their careers with absolute professional independence and with every assistance from a sympathetic landlord which understands the changing nature of their industry.

Of course not every practice can operate from a new, state-of-the-art clinic employing the latest 'green' advances. However, there is always scope for improvement. The one certainty in the green debate is that it is here to stay, and every dental practice, of whatever type and wherever it is located, can make a contribution. From using recycled paper to fitting a new skylight, there are endless possibilities. And if you are considering setting up in practice, or expanding your existing business, leasing could be the option, which benefits your bank balance as well as the environment.



After graduating from the Stockholm School of Economics with an MBA, Allan Weiner began his career in 1990 as a management consultant with Roland Berger & Partners. Here he spent 7 years and gained considerable experience in private equity, mainly with Speed Ventures, as an investment director in London and Stockholm. In 2001 Allan set up Euro Clinics, a London-based healthcare service operation, offering cardiovascular screening and echocardiography. Allan joined CareCapital in 2004, and is now Executive Director.

For more information about leasing, contact CareCapital on 0207 034 1949, e-mail [info@carecapital.co.uk](mailto:info@carecapital.co.uk) or visit [www.carecapital.co.uk](http://www.carecapital.co.uk)