



Sirona's CEREC machine

(IPO) on November 26, 2009, Q & M Dental Group's shares triumphed on the Singapore Stock Exchange (SGX) and surged as much as 32 per cent when trading hit a high of 32.5 cents, according to a TODAY report, published on November 27, 2009. A total of 74.1 million placement shares were sold at 27 cents each, reaping in gross proceeds of S\$20 million.

"After our successful IPO, our business should improve because everyday, people can see us on the Main Board of SGX and Q & M is the only dental group there," shared a jubilant Dr. Ng.

Over a comprehensive period of three and a half years of data collection, Q&M now has over 350,000 patients in its data base, with 8,000 to 9,000 new patients every month.

Management of clinics

Managing such a large chain could appear to be a mean feat, but Dr. Ng is quick to attribute his success to his team.

Regular monthly meetings are held, and information constantly passed onto the staff to familiarise them with the clinic's protocol and procedures. Management of the clinics are shared by the clinic supervisor and the dentist-in-charge. Keeping to a stringent set of various Key Performance Indicators as required by ISO standards, Q & M is all about "Quality."

Although considered a "neighbourhood clinic", Dr. Ng states that they provide the same high quality dentistry commonly associated with the upmarket practices, but at competitive rates.

In addition to the standard protocol of gown, mask and gloves, all equipment used at all Q & M clinics are

autoclaved. "We are very particular about preventing cross infection from patient to patient, patient to dentists, and dentists to patients," Dr. Ng comments. "We spend a lot of money on infection control procedures because we feel that it is important".

As a chain, one might expect Q & M to operate the way many other chains (regardless of industry) operate – where each location looks almost identical, and use the same equipment and materials. "The dentists in the Q & M group have full autonomy on the choice of materials and which dental laboratory they prefer to use," Dr. Ng said. "Even if dentists are trained by the same school, and have the same lecturers, they are all different. They will each have their own preferences. While the management still makes the final decisions on major things, like the renovation of the clinics, or the dental units that are installed in the rooms, I cannot control my dentists to that micro level, nor do I want to."

He further explains, "Dentists are professionals and they are all skilled. If the company is not treating them well enough, they can just walk out. In my setting, I have created an environment that is so conducive and so comfortable for the dentists that all they need to do is concentrate on managing their patients. As professionals, they are encouraged to do their best in looking after their patients. If the patients are happy, they will refer their friends and family back to us, and in this way, our business will grow."

As part of their efforts to provide their dentists and patients with an optimal environment, the management does extensive research on the equipment, both the functions, and the after sales support. "For example," Dr. Ng elaborates, "When I buy a chair, I will look for after sales service, both in terms of pricing and how fast the technicians can respond, especially after office hour as our clinics are most busy during the nights and weekends. Our chairs are always busy, and patients are always there. I cannot afford to have a chair that breaks down for one or two days."

When it comes to patient management, Dr. Ng shares that Q & M produces a booklet, entitled "Guidelines to Clinical Practice", that all dentists receive upon joining the group. Experiences gained in more than 13 years of dental practice have been documented, and aims to equip the Q & M dentists with patient management skills.

The Q&M Dental Centre

With the Dental Centre, Q & M has expanded its operations in a big way. Officially opened on December 15, 2009, Q & M Dental Centre at City Square Mall is among the first local private dental practices applying to become an accredited learning centre under the Ministry of Health, offering courses and training to dental practitioners.

Once accreditation is achieved, and as an accredited