1. **PPO's increase market share and insurance benefits decrease.** The insurance companies are in it for profit. They will continue to reduce benefits, deny procedures, punish the patient for going “out of network” and keep maximums flat. Many employers faced with the prospect of health care reform will stop paying for dental coverage and let the employee pay the premium. This may reduce participation overall. Many dentists will need to rethink their opinion about PPO participation.

2. **Need for less expensive treatment plans.** Patients are still “shell shocked” with the sluggish economy and their buying may never return to pre-Recession high. Therefore, it is important to help patients by offering less expensive alternatives. You may need to do the build up this year and a crown next year. Those dentists who become *Experts* at removables and dentures will be in demand as the Baby Boomers age. Not, every patient can afford the expense of implants. However, with good financing and communication skills you can help the patient see the benefits of lower implants to anchor their denture.

3. **New options to replace PFM’s.** The expenses of high noble metals has gotten out of hand for the average dentist and patients. If your reimbursement for a crown is $650 and you pay the lab $200 plus, you are NOT profitable. Dentists love their labs and I do not want to sever that relationship. However, there are alternative materials and labs if your reimbursement is going down. According to experts 80% or more of all future restorations will be NON-metal.

4. **The dental/oral systemic connection will continue to make inroads.** With health TV show popularity such as Dr. Oz leading the consumer’s thinking, you will see the reinforcement of oral health with systemic health. Many aging Baby Boomers are facing chronic diseases of lifestyle and will be more open to your hygienist having the conversation about their oral health and general health. If you have not joined AAOSH - The American Academy for Oral Systemic Health, join or have your hygienist join and attend their session in September 2013. www.aaosh.org.

5. **High-tech impressions.** With less than 10% of dentists having a CAD/CAM milling system in their practice, there will be a trend toward the digital impression technology which sent to the lab for milling. Since there is not current legislation against, the trained dental assistant can use the scanner for you and save time. The competition in this market will bring new vendors that will increase at first and then weed themselves out like the intra-oral camera makers did.
6. New systems of injections will continue to flourish since the injection is the thing most patients HATE. The new Onpharama system uses a new anesthetic buffering agent. Check them out on You Tube.

7. The internet is the primary tool for searching for a dentist. The WEB rules. More patients will find their new dentist via the web. The yellow pages and the newspaper are dead marketing mediums unless you are in the aged (over 65) age demographics. Having a consumer (not dentist) oriented website will be A CRITICAL MARKETING ELEMENT. Websites need a webmeister who knows and keeps abreast of the latest SEO (Search Engine Optimization), uses testimonials, immediate capture of the web browsing patient with instant access to the office and offers which fit the patient. Websites are NOT a “put up and forget” marketing aid for the future. The need for continual updates, personalized photos of before and after procedures, and professional (marketing professional) input will be critical – particularly the more educated your patients OR the younger your patients. Be sure your webmaster is prodding you to continue to improve you analytics.

8. Implants will continue to develop and change the way treatment planning is done. The debate will continue with endo VS implant. Implants are getting smaller so many patient who were not candidates can now enjoy the security of an implant. The general dentists will increase their education to deliver both the surgery AND the restorative part of implant treatment. Competition of Corporate Implant centers in metro areas will heat up the price competition for implants. But, it will also make more consumers aware of implants. Be sure your patients know that this is part of your abilities.

9. Dentistry and running a business will become closer than ever before. The days of put up the shingle and have a great life as a dentist are far gone. The business component will become critical to future success. Thus, the emergence of a true professional OFFICE MANAGER. Dentists will need to hire and/or train a professional to be a business partner with them to run the practice. Far too many dentists run smack out of time to pay full attention to the business of the practice. Many want to deliver the care and go home. Thus, the appeal of the corporate model to today’s new grads who are usually married to another professional. Consider looking within to train a business partner with some of the certified courses available to you.

10. Need based dental care on the rise. Due to the economic “recession” consumers have put off dental care and the visits to the Emergency Room for dental related incidents is on the rise. Dentists will need procedures and protocols to deal effectively with the emergency dental patient and to deliver care that may be episodic.

Digest these Trends and discuss them with your team for a great staff meeting. Make goals to deal with any of the trends that your practice will face.
Jennifer C. McDonald, has been providing management and technology solutions to dentists for over twenty years. She is Managing Partner of Dental Management Advisors, a dental consulting firm that specializes in assisting dental professionals achieve excellence in leadership and management. Jennifer’s experience combined with her attention to detail and long-range planning skills, greatly contributes to the growth and development of her past and present clients – more than 500 located nationwide.

Nationally recognized as a speaker in the area of practice management and technology integration, Jennifer has presented to the American Dental Association, the Yankee Dental Congress, as well as regional meetings and study clubs. She enjoys teaching new dentists how to start-up a practice “the right way” with her annual courses for the Medical College of Georgia and the University of Alabama at Birmingham’s School of Dentistry. Her articles on business and technology solutions have been published in JADA – The Journal of the American Dental Association, Dental Economics, Dentistry Today, Dental Products Report, and Alpha Omegan.

Jennifer is a member of TAG (Technology Alliance of Georgia) and WIT (Women in Technology). From single-doctor start up practices to group practices, her combined management and technology expertise offers a well-rounded approach to improving efficiencies and effectiveness (and de-stressing) the dental practice.