

# MESS S.O.S.

TIRED OF A CLUTTERED, DISORGANIZED OFFICE? ZIRC'S SIGNATURE COLOR CODING CAN HELP YOU CLEAN UP YOUR ACT.

**THE PROBLEM OF** the cluttered practice probably dates to the Pleistocene Era — but it really got cooking in the 1960s, when high turnover among suddenly ubiquitous assistants and hygienists made organization difficult, leading to equipment shortages and poor sterilization. That's also when Zirc, the dental-storage company headquartered in Buffalo, Minnesota, developed its first color-coded system for harried practitioners. More than four decades later, it's as sensible as ever.

"It's like organizing a kitchen: You've got a lot of different things, and you need to make it all work better," says Nicolle Folven, a Zirc vice president who help doctors worldwide streamline their surroundings. Start where the action is: Are you storing materials in your operatories? Don't. You'll need more inventory that way, and during patient treatment, your assistant will have to leave chairside. It's inefficient — and not ideal for infection control, either.

Keep just the basics in your operatories: high-volume evacuators, saliva ejectors, gloves, bibs, cotton products and the like. Then put

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**IT'S AROUND HERE SOMEWHERE:**

If areas of your practice could be mistaken for a teenager's bedroom, you need to get better organized.



**A RIGHT JOLLY OLD SHELF:** Clutter and disorder (inset) give way to color-coded tidiness.

all procedure-related materials into color-coded tubs, like the one shown above: green for endo, purple for crown-and-bridge, whatever arrangement you like — as long as it's consistent. Store the tubs in a central area or closet, with bulk material stored separately. Then restock all tubs at the same time. Implement a similar (but, again, separate) colored tub and tagging system for your instruments. Your staff will then always know exactly what they're looking at — or where they can find it.

Is your practice Lilliputian? Your need for order is even greater, "especially in your sterilization area, where lack of space is such a frustration," Folven says. "I run into this all the time in Europe, where they generally work in smaller spaces."

The system works equally well for larger practices, too; just be sure to code by both procedure and practitioner. Big or tiny, though, never commit Folven's cardinal sin: color coding by room and storing all materials room by room. That's "the worst," she notes — a pointless exercise that leads only to confusion. In the end, it comes down to your mother's timeless advice: Pick up after yourself, and do it right. You, your staff and your patients will all be happier.

Writer: Brian Dawson. Photographs courtesy of Zirc

AFTER A LENGTHY STUDY, SCIENTISTS IN CHINA RECENTLY CONCLUDED THAT **REMINERALIZING AGENTS** FOR THE TREATMENT OF POST-ORTHODONTIC WHITE-SPOT LESIONS ARE NOT ESPECIALLY EFFECTIVE. . . . SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN MAGAZINE RECENTLY HIGHLIGHTED THE SHEEPSHEAD FISH, FOUND