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# THE EDITOR'S CORNER

## 2011 JCO Orthodontic Practice Study

It's been 30 years now since I started working at JCO—coincidentally, at the same time we were preparing the reports on our first Orthodontic Practice Study. Since then, technology has wrought many changes in the way we publish the journal. Our text used to be typeset and pasted up on boards to shoot film for offset printing; now, everything is done digitally until the point where the ink hits the paper (and if you receive only the online edition, you don't see paper at all).

Likewise, technology has changed the way orthodontics has been practiced over the last three decades. But just as magazine publishing still involves delivering information to a subscriber, orthodontics still comes down to delivering a service to a patient. What makes this latest biennial survey a bit different is that practitioners are having to do so amid perhaps the most difficult economic period since our first Study was released in 1981. Indeed, our results from the past few years show a drop in case starts accompanied by a rise in overhead, though income figures have been more stagnant than declining.

Orthodontists apparently understand that their patients are in the same boat, because the rise in fees during the last two-year period is the lowest we've ever seen. Clinicians seem to be liberalizing their fee-payment arrangements and focusing on patient relations and external marketing. Despite rising costs, we see an effort to manage every dollar more wisely in terms of financial tracking.

Over the next several issues, we'll delve into more details about how practice management can relate to success in terms of net income and growth. If you would like to peruse even more complete tables or the questionnaire itself, they will eventually be available to any JCO subscriber on our website at www.jco-online.com.

As always, we'd like to thank the hundreds of practitioners who took the time to fill out these lengthy surveys and return them anonymously for analysis; without that participation, the specialty would not have this 30-year record of the economics and administration of orthodontic practice in the United States.

DSV