

# THE EDITOR'S CORNER

## Jewish Penicillin

**C**hicken soup, affectionately known as “Jewish penicillin,” is widely celebrated for its comforting and healing properties. The nickname derives from a long-standing belief in its medicinal qualities, especially among Jewish communities in Europe, where mothers and grandmothers have long relied on it as a home remedy during difficult days.

The idea of Jewish penicillin got me thinking about how orthodontists can support their teams during challenging times. Just as a warm bowl of soup provides comfort and nourishment, small yet meaningful actions—a kind word, a check-in, or a thoughtful act—can go a long way in boosting staff morale and resilience. After all, healing is just as much about nurturing the spirit as it is about treating the body. So, here are a few simple acts of kindness that I make a point to do for my team regularly.

When our office feels especially chaotic, whether during a school holiday rush or when we're short-staffed, my favorite way to boost morale is to treat the team to a nice lunch at their choice of restaurant. (Pizza delivery doesn't count.) I also add two hours to the day's payroll and acknowledge the staff's hard work—making sure I speak loudly enough for everyone in the waiting room to hear: “I'm so proud of how hard everyone is working. I know it's extremely busy right now, but you're all doing an amazing job as a team.”

Another quick way to improve morale is to use a brief lull in the morning workflow to have a team member pick up a round of Starbucks. Ordering online ahead of time ensures a quick return to the office. You'd be surprised at the impact such a small act can have. It's not just a cup of coffee—it's a way to show appreciation, foster camaraderie, and set a positive tone for the day.

Beyond recognizing the team as a whole, I also make sure to publicly praise staff members as individuals. It costs nothing but can significantly build their confidence and reinforce a sense of teamwork. My favorite thing to say to an orthodontic technician completing a challenging procedure is, “That's better than I could have done!” Say this in front of a parent sitting beside their child in the clinic, and you will immediately see the technician's eyes light up with pride.

As for the healing properties of chicken soup, they aren't just an old wives' tale. One study found that it can slow the migration of neutrophils, the white blood cells that cause inflammation during a cold.<sup>1</sup> Each ingredient has a benefit: warm broth hydrates, delivers amino acids, and soothes respiratory passages; garlic and onions boost immunity; vegetables and spices provide antioxidants; and noodles supply energy.<sup>2</sup> It turns out Jewish penicillin is real medicine.

While many families have their own cherished recipes, my wife's go-to remedy for runny noses and crummy days is loaded with large carrots, egg noodles, and Streit's matzo balls. Whether you serve your version of Jewish penicillin at home or at the office, it's a comforting reminder that even in the most challenging moments, simple acts of kindness can make everything feel just a little better—a prescription that both Fleming and bubbe would undoubtedly approve.

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## REFERENCES

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2. Hopkins, A.B.: Chicken soup cure may not be a myth, *Nurse Pract.* 28:16, 2003.