

You Don't Know...What You Don't Know

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Each and every day your patients interact with your staff. Do you know what takes place during those interactions? You should; those interactions are a primary factor in what either fuels or stalls your practice growth. 68% of patients who leave a practice do so because of something a staff member did...and you may never know about it.

Find out what your patients think. One way is through social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and Yelp, where you will receive clear and unedited feedback from happy as well as unhappy patients. What do you do with that information? Do you embrace it, share it, learn from it, or do you run away? My suggestion is to embrace it, share it, learn from it, and then take action to insure that your practice exceeds every expectation your patients may have.

Find out what's going on in your practice:

Starting at the phone, what does your staff member say to patients when they call? "What type of insurance do you have?" "What day do you want an appointment?" "We don't have openings that day." Do any of those phrases make the patient feel special and connected to your practice? No. Yet they are repeated over and over every day by staff. How can you get the information you need and still make the patient feel like you care that they called to book an appointment?

When the patient walks through the door, is the first question "Do you have an appointment?" "Can I see your insurance card?" This is not very welcoming. How would you like your patient to be greeted as they walk in the door?

In the pre-testing area, is the patient instructed to "Put your chin here, lean forward, push the button when you see the light." This doesn't really communicate the value of the investment you have made in instrumentation that helps you better care for your patients' health. What should every patient know about his or her pre-testing experience?

In the optical area communication is critical, yet the dreaded first question is still most likely to be, "Do you want to see what your insurance will cover?" or "Why don't you look around and see if you find something you like." Neither of these options help the patient see better, and isn't that the goal?

The final stop is checkout, where fees are quoted and money collected but all too often the staff person has little or no ability to explain why the freeform lens was a perfect choice or why the doctor recommended a particular procedure. This is not the best final impression of the practice. How would you like the patient to feel as they leave at the end of their exam?

A Few Final Questions

What don't you know about your practice? How can you find out? Have you set expectation levels to achieve your goal? Do you provide training and education for staff to achieve those goals? Is there follow up? Who oversees the staff? When and how does someone listen to the exchanges between staff and patients? What takes place when the interaction is below standards? Is there accountability? Are any of these actions effective?

Want to exceed your patients' expectations? Establish a plan, execute that plan, and then follow up. Embrace the information you receive, share it with staff, and learn by improving standards and performances.