

15 Ways to Provide *Superior* Dental Patient Care



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15 Ways to provide Superior Patient Care

1. Warm Welcome

Normally we don't advocate for an employee to be watching the clock because it might indicate that they can't wait to skate out the door. However, we do want the person at the front desk to be aware of what time it is throughout the entire day. We want them to be ready for the next scheduled patient to walk in the door so they can greet them, (hopefully by name) with a smile and a warm hello.

2. Benevolent Team

We are in the people business. Therefore, all team members needs to be a people person. Hiring an introvert that is shy just won't due. Patients often walk in the door with fear or trepidation and we need the team to be warm, friendly, comforting and sympathetic.

3. You had me at Hello

- Excellent phone skills are essential to providing superior patient care. Listening and giving the patient on the phone your full attention is vital.
- If a patient calls with a toothache/broken tooth, don't immediately go into the normal questioning of what area of the mouth? How long has it been hurting? STOP and show some empathy and reassure them that you will be more than happy to help them. "I'm so sorry to hear you have a toothache Mrs. Jones. Rest assured that we will take good care of you and our number one priority is to get you out of discomfort."
- When a new patient calls to inquire about the office because they are looking for a new dentist, everyone answering the phone should be prepared to answer questions about the doctor's bio. For example, what dental school did they go to? How long have they been practicing? Patients might even ask questions about materials, procedures and if the office offers Nitrous oxide, sedation, etc. Being able to talk up your doctor, team and entire office and letting the patient get to know you is essential to making a connection. This makes all the difference when the patient is trying to make a decision between your office and Dr. Joe Shmoe's down the street.

4. Become a Dental Detective

- Sometimes you have to be a dental detective. There are so many patients that don't know what insurance they have or that their insurance has even changed. Why not see if you have other patients with the same employer and see which carrier they have or try the big carriers for a faxback or online eligibility.
- If you are not lucky enough to be a fee for service office and you accept insurance, breakdowns are important to give accurate estimates. Yes, you can always pre-authorize, but we all know that the likelihood of not making a next appointment before the patient leaves decreases the chances of the patient getting the treatment done. Be a detective or outsource this service, but do not skip it.



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- If a new patient calls and informs you that they think they had an FMX a year ago, get the previous dentist information and also check the history with the insurance company. They might only know the name of the office, but not the phone number. Thank goodness for Google!! Also, checking the history with the insurance company is important. Maybe they have switched carriers since having the radiographs and taking a new FMX won't even be an issue. I've seen too many times where we schedule the NP for an FMX without doing our due diligence and it gets denied by the insurance company due to frequency. All of these steps take time, but it's better than doing free dentistry. It will ensure that the office gets paid for services rendered.

5. **Star Status**

- The most important person in the room, is the patient in front of you. There will be times when a patient walks in the door and you are on the phone. If you can't hang up or put the person on hold, at least acknowledge the patient walking in by a warm smile and softly saying that you will be right with them.
- NEVER state to the back office that their next patient is here is front of another patient. Have a system in place to notify the back office when the next patient arrives. Also, have a system in place when the hygienist needs an exam or the doctor has a call. Post-its are our friends. 😊

6. **Patient Pictures**

- Yes, please! Often Dental Practice Softwares have the capability of storing a patient's picture on their account. This is a fabulous way to greet the patient directly either when they walk in the door or when the back office calls out their name to bring them back. This is so much better than the back office calling out the patient's name and then looks around the waiting room to see who stands up.
- I have seen offices that don't use photos and what doesn't fare very well is if a patient walks in the door and the front office guesses who they are and are wrong.
- If you don't use patient photos and you don't know who the patient is when they walk in the door, you can always greet them and ask, "How can I help you?" This would be better than guessing.

7. **SMALL talk is a BIG deal.**

Part of the front desk's responsibility is to verify the patient's information when they walk in the door, but there is always time to ask them how they're doing or how their day is going.

8. **Run on time!**

We expect patients to respect our time by not cancelling at the last minute and showing up on time for their appointments. Let's respect their time as well. Although unexpected things can happen, try hard to make this part of your office's mission statement.



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9. Complimentary Beverages

This especially comes in handy if the patient is early, there are family members going back to back, or for those patients that have loved ones waiting for them. Have coffee, tea, bottled water or a water cooler available to offer those while they wait. Some offices even provide snack choices as well.

10. Complimentary Guest wifi

Some say technology rules the world. So what a nice thing to have for a patient that shows up early that brought their laptop to do some work or for someone that is waiting. If by any chance that something unexpected happens and the office is running behind, most likely checking their social media will keep them entertained.

11. The waiting is the hardest part

- We all can run behind, but it's how you handle it that matters. If the back office is running behind and the next patient is in the waiting room, ALWAYS keep the patient informed on how much longer.
- Always try to seat a patient within 10 minutes of their appointment time.
- Have your front office crossed trained to be able to clean a room and seat the patient. This is where friendly conversation comes into play. Whether the patient is out in the waiting room or you sat them in the operatory, have a team member keep them company.
- Be able to read the room. Some patients don't mind if you seat them in the operatory by themselves because they welcome the alone time.

12. Let me entertain you

- Always have current magazines in the office.
- Have a kids area in the waiting room where they can color or draw. Toys are difficult to keep sanitized.
- Televisions in the operatories either network TV, Netflix, Amazon Prime or Hulu.
- In office Music. Pandora, Spotify or the good old fashioned radio.

13. Comfort Menu

Pillows, blankets, protective eye wear, lip balm and aromatherapy scents.

14. Communication is Key

- Not only is it important to have good communicate with your patients, but also between the team. I can't stress enough how important it is to have morning huddles. This is the time to review the days schedule and all be on the same page about the patients coming in that day, the flow of the day, emergency time and assigning who will ask which patients for reviews or referrals. Being prepared just makes the day go smoother.
- Repeat and reiterate. Patients will retain more information if it is repeated, especially amongst the team in front of the patient. For Example, the hygienist points out some concerns to the patient during the cleaning and then informs the doctor to check these



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- areas during the exam. The doctor dictates the necessary treatment to the hygienist and then explains the treatment to the patient. The hygienist walks the patient up to the front desk and reiterates the treatment to the treatment coordinator. The treatment coordinator prints and presents the treatment plan to the patient once again explaining the diagnosed treatment.
- Make notes when you've had a conversation about what's going on in the patient's lives. Are they taking a vacation, getting married, having a baby, etc. The patient is pleasantly surprised when you ask them about it the next time you see them.
 - There is always an area in your dental software for notes. Take the time to enter thorough and accurate clinical, appointment, billing and general notes. This way a team member can effectively assist a patient without having to find out the information from the dentist or another team member and have to get back to the patient.

15. Fabulous Farewell

- There are several ways to ensure that a patient has a memorable visit. Number one is to always ask how their visit was. You want to make sure that they had a good experience. If you sense that they didn't, you can always ask what the office could have done to make their visit more pleasant.
- Try and have their treatment estimate ready to present along with any literature explaining the procedure. Some offices even use a company like Guru that emails educational videos explaining the procedure(s).
- Inform patients of your financial policies and options. There are 3 main reasons why patients don't do treatment. Time, Money and Fear. Make sure your office has solutions to all of these reasons and you will have less patients with outstanding and unscheduled treatment.
- Make sure everything presented is clear. They shouldn't have any questions about what they need next or what they will owe.
- Goodie bags for hygiene appointments with a toothbrush, tooth paste and floss is always a nice gift to give.

If you have any questions about these tips, please contact me 818-216-9730. I am here to help your practice succeed.

Sincerely,

Candice Martin