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Handout for SDDS Winter Convention 2.12.22 Program Communicating Financially with Your Patients

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Jenny discussed Patient's Consultation with Doctor needs to cover 3 specific areas
a-Clinical Findings b-Financial Payment Options
c-Management policies re Reconfirmation & No Shows

Objectives and Benefits:

1. Reduce Doctor/Hygiene Re-Confirmation calls from 100% to 15%
2. Save time/labor currently spent chasing patients around town who don't require/request service
3. Remove ability of 'inviting patients to 'Cancel Short Notice' during such a re-confirmation call

Q. Why do dental practices confirm appointments?

A. Usually because dentist feels that is a necessary service to ensure patients 'turn up'

Q. What do re-confirming appointments so often lead to?

A. Cancel Short Notice (Patient: "I'm so glad you called, I've been meaning to call you for days")

JdSG research shows

- Practices **not re-confirming** appointments enjoy a **lower** NS rate than practices which do
- Practices **re-confirm appointments** have a **higher** NS rate than practices which don't.

At end of New Patient Consultation, staff pro-actively make a statement re what is usual & customary for their practice's Re-confirmation services (see script below)

Verbal Skills re your Confirmation Call Service

Staff:

'In our practice we do not confirm appointments. Our patients have told us that they don't like having their busy schedules interrupted, and they are quite prepared to take responsibility for keeping their own appointments'

PAUSE for 4-5 seconds to allow the patient to respond in one of two ways:

Patient Response #1

'No problem, I don't need my appointments confirmed. I don't like the interruptions.'
(JdSG goal-- 80% of patients to fall in this category)

OR**Patient Response #2**

'I have a major problem remembering appointments. Can you please contact me the day before to remind me'

Staff: Staff must ascertain by which METHOD does the patient want this service

'Our pleasure, which works best for you-email, or text?'

OUTCOME: Now you are providing a great service to patients who request it and not annoying the vast majority of patients who do not request/need or want yet another text, email etc. You will note I have taken a telephone call off the table.

NOTE: Visually mark each patient's account as to the patients choice so everyone knows the patient's decision.

Linking No-Show Policy to your Re-Confirming Appointment service

2. Re-Confirmation Policy and NO SHOW policies are linked...so:

- Once the Reconfirmation service has been discussed, time to discuss HOW the practice handles a patients '**need to change their appointments**'.

Verbal Skills for Administrative Staff re your No-Show guidelines

1. *'As long as we receive at least 48* hours-notice of your need to change your appointment, there will be absolutely no charge.'* (Practice takes pro-active/positive approach, doesn't wait for 1st NS and then respond re-actively)
2. *'Should we not hear from you at least 48 hours prior to your scheduled appointment, of your need to re-schedule, there will be a \$50 charge for each half hour missed.'*
3. *'We are sure that this will not be an issue. We find our patients are wonderful at reaching out to us when they have scheduling changes in their lives.'*

* Offer 48 hours, research shows most practices get 24-hour notice. Offer 24 hours, you'll be lucky to hear from them by midnight the evening before!!

JdSG No-Show Management Guidelines:

- All NP told, both verbally and stated in written FA's
- 1st No-Show happens? Offer a one-time only NS waiver (free, complimentary). Good PR
- Send out the statement with the \$ charged and then adjusted off the account as being the *first missed appointment-waived No Show fee/charge*
- Charge is \$50 for each half-hour missed. 3 consecutive NS appointments and patient invited to find practice with a more flexible schedule. (Handle in a legally responsible manner)

Q. Is the purpose of the NS charge to create a profit center or a new income source?

A No!

Q. Then, what is the goal of the NS charge?

A. To have the patients either call in advance to change appointment or patient keeps their appointment. Either way, the NS rate dramatically is reduced.

Practice Malpractice Prevention

Be very sure to capture every No Show in all patients' records

2 How to change your Patients of Record from expecting to continue to receive their usual 'just reminding you of your appointment tomorrow call'

- Call each patient as usual for their next appointment
- When patient is on site and being discharged bring them up to date with the new approach and ask them how they would like to handle their future scheduled appointment needs-Email/text or they prefer not to receive email/text
- ◆ Verbal skills are exactly same as for the NP above, with ONE phrase added at beginning

Verbal Skill for Administrative Staff: re Confirmation Policy

'Since you were last in to see us, we no longer re-confirm appointments. Our patients have told us that they don't like having their busy schedules interrupted, and they are quite prepared to take responsibility for keeping their own appointments.'

PAUSE.. then handle as per EACH patients' needs