

A Dentist is Judged by Everything BUT their Quality of Care...



By Jennifer de St. Georges
MidWinter Speaker

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In today's challenging times—every dental practice needs to focus on the quality of their non-clinical services. In order to both attract, and then retain, quality patients, this 25 Point Guide is offered to enable a dentist and team to analyze their level of customer service.

Clinical Focus

1 A Painless Injection. The ultimate answer to a patient who says “Doctor, I’m ready now, let’s get the shot over” is to be told ‘Mrs. Patient, I’ve already given you the injection!’ #1 practice reputation builder.

2 Does not hurt. You may ask why this is not covered under #1 Injection? Because there are dentists providing painless dentistry yet with a less than painless injection technique.

3 “Dr, that was the most thorough dental examination I’ve ever had.” Supporting a comprehensive examination with what is being covered both educates patients to the examination thoroughness as well as prepare them for the Consultation diagnosis.

4 Dentist who listen and allow patients to ask questions. Today’s patients, prior to their appointment, are certainly doing their homework on the internet. Being prepared to take quality time to listen and understand their perceived needs and correct mis-conceptions is the foundation of building a doctor/patient relationship.

5 Well explained treatment plan and financial options. “Inform before you perform—no surprises” says it all!

6 General/Specialist referrals. Confident in their provider’s recommendation, patients do follow through when referred out to another dentist for further services. As powerful, administrative staff personally visited these practices.

7 Post op Telephone calls. Dentists who “follow up” daily with key patients, cannot over-estimate patients’ appreciation. Patients rank this as one of the top customer services.

8 Post op instructions. Patients educated re potential post op issues, feel informed and secure that there is a lifeline available if needed. Outcome? Out of hours/weekend calls actually are greatly reduced.

9 High Standard of Sterilization. Sterilization not only must be done, but it must also SEEN to be done. A picture is worth a thousand words. i.e., a dirty bathroom and/or reception room undermines all OSHA practices being performed.

10 Dental equipment. Patients today expect and judge a practice on the level of technical diagnosis equipment.

11 Personal hygiene of Doctor/Team. If we love garlic, love garlic on Friday and Saturday nights.

12 Dentistry of Doctor/Team. We need to “walk our talk.”

13 Patients are “happy with the results.” Untrained in clinical dentistry, patients love sharing their satisfaction to friends, family and on social media. One cannot buy that endorsement.

14 Financial/Money! In my opinion, a patient only questions the fee when they are confused as to the potential treatment benefit outcomes as they perceive them.

Scheduling Focus

15 Runs on time. Today, we are a world without patience. A practice which regularly “runs on time” gains patients’ respect and results in referrals. Practices routinely running late either loses patients or attracts patients who appreciate ability to turn up late and still be seen.

16 Prompt emergency service. One can grow, or kill a practice, by the way administrative staff handle emergency patients telephone calls. To help emergency patients in a caring and efficient way, without compromising doctor’s quality time with scheduled patients, requires the correct techniques.

17 Prompt new patient examination appointment. IMO All new patients should be scheduled within seven practice days of the call. Your new patient exam show rate should be 100%. If not, the practice is not meeting the potential new patients perceived needs.

18 Out of Hours service. Do patients seeking help in evenings and/or weekends feel looked after or ignored?

19 Continuing Care. Customizing a patient’s months/appointment needs builds trust, prebooking and referrals.

20 Hours. Practice should analyze both their patients’ travel and scheduling needs, as well as that of doctor/team.

Overall

21 Staff. Who is kind, professional, caring, helpful. Nothing builds a doctor/patient relationship faster than staff retention.

22 Building a Telephone Relationship. Team members building a relationship with potential patients via the telephone enjoy great acceptance of the practice and guidelines. Patients need to build a relationship with your administrative staff not your website!

23 Helpful with 3rd party providers. Whether taking assignments or not, working in or out of network, a positive approach to helping patients to maximize their insurance benefits is a service patients appreciate.

24 Facility is up to date. We judge people by what we see—are we modern/high tech or old school?

25 Location. A practice with a strong referral practice, finds their location neither enhances nor sabotages their success. Patients who book because it is convenient, will leave a practice when it becomes inconvenient unless they have built a relationship with the dentist/team and perceive the benefit of that relationship.

Summary

The dentist and team delivering quality dentistry in a professional, caring and welcoming environment build a strong and growing referral practice. Happy patients become your “practice ambassadors.” ■

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