Successful Patient Recall:
Five Tips for Getting Patients Back Into the Practice

Have you ever thought about the amount of revenue you miss out on when patients fail to adhere to treatment guidelines? Many patients don’t schedule hygiene appointments, oral cancer screenings and other preventive care treatments in advance. For many, their busy schedule prevents them from knowing their availability that far into the future and inevitably they forget to call for an appointment when it’s time for their next cleaning.

With the value of an appointment at $125 and up, it’s easy to see how big of an impact a large quantity of missed or unscheduled appointments could make in your practice.

An effective recall strategy can help your practice meet revenue goals and keep patients on schedule. More appointments mean more revenue for your practice, and proactive outreach is a great way to increase patient satisfaction as well.

A recall strategy is a great idea. After all, no practice wants to lose potential revenue. But how do you actually do it? The reality is that many practices lack the staff or resources to manually call patients to remind them when it’s time to schedule an appointment, and as postage rates continue to rise, postcard reminders become a less viable option. The efficiency of an automated recall campaign truly matters, as does the time of day messages are delivered, the urgency around the appointment and more.

Recall messages using automated calls, text and email allow your practice convenient channels of communication for reaching out to patients to schedule future appointments. According to studies by numerous sources, almost 300 billion email messages are sent daily. Text messages are flying off the fingers of the young and old. 200 trillion text messages are sent every day in America, which is more than an entire year’s worth of mail. Did you know the average American teenager sends over 3,300 text messages per month? Texting is a very popular medium. It's also the fastest growing form of communication and most requested option from patients in healthcare.¹

How can you turn these easy mediums of communication into an effective recall strategy?

1. MAKE SURE YOU DO IT.
That sounds simple enough but scheduling recall messages can easily be overlooked. Make sure you take time each day to view the patients who need to be recalled by your automated messaging system if your PMS doesn’t do it for you. It just takes a moment to set this communication up and if only a few patients schedule an appointment, it could mean thousands of dollars in revenue for your practice.
2. CREATE URGENCY IN YOUR MESSAGE.

Patients need to be made to feel like their appointment is important. Make your message sound urgent, while friendly. Ask patients to call in immediately to schedule an appointment and tell them that you look forward to getting their treatment schedule back on track.

Hello, this is Linda from Dr. Johnson's office. We want to remind you that maintaining your dental health is a high priority of our staff. It has been more than six months since we've had the pleasure of seeing Lisa and we would like to schedule an appointment today. Please call us at 855-555-1212 between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. to schedule another appointment. We look forward to seeing you soon.

3. FOCUS ON LONG OVERDUE PATIENTS AS WELL.

It's easy to only send out messages to patients who have only missed one or two appointments. What about the patients you haven't seen in a year or more? What if you could call all of those patients and schedule them for another appointment? Reactivating these lost patients is critical to achieving the growth your practice wants. If 250 lost patients called in to schedule a hygiene visit, that could mean upwards of over $31,000 in additional revenue for your practice this year!

4. ASSUME THE APPOINTMENT.

A common sales technique is known as "assuming the sale." For your practice, "assume the appointment." When you create a recall message for your practice, craft it in such a way that you assume everyone receiving it is going to call in and schedule another appointment. It creates urgency and makes you sound confident that you know best for their treatment needs.

This is Dr. Jones. It has been more than six months since we've had the pleasure of seeing you. When you call in to schedule your next appointment, please ask about our new whitening solution. Please call us at 855-555-1212 between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. to schedule another appointment. We have many early morning or late afternoon appointments available for you and we look forward to seeing you soon.

5. MAKE THEM LIKE YOU.

Having a strong relationship with your patients is one of the best things you can do for your recall strategy. Being likable when they're in the practice will make them want to come back for future appointments and make them more likely to come back should they miss an appointment. Patients want to be treated well and by being personable and friendly, they'll be more likely to return for future appointments.

1 http://www.thevisibledentist.com/blog/dental-patient-recall-tips/

2 http://community.pennwelldentalgroup.com/profiles/blogs/top-5-tips-for-effective