

for gaining their trust. Targeting this population on Facebook and Google Ads can be effective, as can pay-per-click ads to maximize marketing dollars by connecting with people who actually want to be patients.

Snail mail still works with retirees. Direct mail pieces that are especially effective build trust and authority with education. It's important to show retirees what a dental practice can do for them and point out the newer methods of treating dental problems that were not available for their parents.

Proper Messaging

Retirees need to receive messages that address their specific concerns. These should address issues such as financing and

payment plans, new technologies that are now available, how dental care is related to systemic disorders such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease, and how to have the retirement they've dreamed of. When delivering these messages, it's important to avoid referring to them as seniors, senior citizens, or geriatric persons. To build trust with them, the best approach is to use direct mail and social media strategies that are highly targeted to them as individuals.

Peterson VM: The right ways to reach the right new patients: Retirees. *Dent Econ* 108:28, 30-31, 2018

Reprints not available

STAFF EDUCATION

Training to avoid liability claims



BACKGROUND

Each team member contributes to the achievement of a positive patient experience, but each member must also be educated regarding what each one is to do, what they are responsible for, and what limitations are in place. If a team member oversteps or fails to follow through with responsibilities, the result can be a professional liability claim.

CASE REPORT

The patient came for veneers on teeth Nos. 5-12 and 21-28 and insisted that her anterior teeth be addressed first so that she would have a new smile for her daughter's wedding. Her posterior teeth needed treatment, but the dentist agreed to rush the case because the patient was extremely insistent. He prepared and temporalized 16 teeth in a single visit, then seated the permanent veneers 10 days later. The patient seemed happy, but left the office without allowing sufficient time to adjust her occlusion or to take intraoral photos. She promised to return after the wedding but failed to keep her follow-up appointment.

The patient returned a month later, complaining of sensitivity throughout her mouth. The dentist saw her immediately and performed an occlusal adjustment, then recommended a return visit in 2 weeks. She returned for a hygiene appointment 3 days later and requested another adjustment, but the dentist wasn't in the office. She was offered an appointment the next day, but she became upset and left without scheduling the appointment.

Several days later she called in and reported persistent pain and sensitivity. The front office did not notify the dentist but reassured the patient that it was normal to experience pain and sensitivity and advised her to wait until her next appointment with the

dentist, which was 1 week away. The patient e-mailed the office the next day and requested an earlier appointment, but the staff responded that there was no opening.

The patient became frustrated with the pain and sensitivity and lack of attention from the dentist, so she requested her records and sought a second opinion. The new dentist diagnosed 10 teeth needing root canal treatment caused by the excessive removal of tooth structure during veneer preparation. The patient informed the office that they would be contacted by her attorney. A subsequent letter from the attorney alleged failure to treat the patient properly, resulting in the need for endodontic treatment, and demanded full refund of the treatment fees and payment for future dental treatment as well as pain and suffering.

ANALYSIS

The breakdown in the staff's treatment of the situation occurred when the front office person failed to notify the dentist of the patient's desire to be seen because of her symptoms. By doing this, the staff member assumed the role of a licensed dentist and put the practice at risk. If the dentist had been notified, the patient's negative experience would likely have been avoided and the outcome changed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The practice owner can empower staff to make independent decisions to ensure a smooth flow of work, but must also provide the proper education regarding professional liability and associated risks. Staff members need to be trained in the procedures and protocols for risk management so that they understand their legal limitations in practice.

Dentists should conduct a risk management assessment of their office to evaluate each staff member's awareness of what proper behavior is in various situations. Mock situations can be used to demonstrate how staff should respond. In addition, written policies, procedures, and protocols should be available that address risk management and liability. Staff members must be trained in how to implement these written guidelines. The practice should maintain a risk management resource library that includes the state dental rules and regulations, samples of appropriate documentation, and a guide to dental terminology and abbreviations.

Staff should also be instructed to inform the dentist of any patient complaints so that he or she can address them directly. The staff should not be relied upon to communicate with unhappy patients.

Practice owners should also remember that they are ultimately held responsible for any decision and action taking place in their facility. Each member of the team is to be considered an extension of the dentist's office philosophy.

Clinical Significance

Relationships between the dental staff and the patient can affect a patient's course of treatment as much as the doctor-patient relationship does. Each staff member should be carefully trained in the area of liability to help mitigate the risk that an adverse situation will develop. Staff members should clearly understand their roles and responsibilities, which will make them more confident in their decisions. They will be able to discern when they can handle things themselves and when they need to refer the situation to the practice owner.

TDIC Risk Management Staff: Depending on staff to manage patients? Educate them first. *Calif Dent Assoc J* 46:455-456, 2018

Reprints not available

UPCYCLING

Making your practice over



BACKGROUND

Upcycling is the term used to describe the processing of used goods or waste material in a way that produces something that can be better than the original. The application of the upcycling concept to a dental practice can lead to a renovation that current patients will notice and new ones will be drawn to.

APPLICATIONS

Marketing

Being aware of the practice website's search engine optimization is an essential part of marketing online. Activities to make one's presence more attractive can be as easy as keeping current with key words or as involved as keeping fresh content available, making navigation of the site easy and intuitive, and ensuring it is up to date. Monitoring the practice's social media presence and making changes to ensure it's appropriate and effective is another way to upcycle.

The personalized branding of the practice can also use a make-over from time to time. Core values should remain but how those are expressed can evolve over time. Having a personal brand can include identifying favorite colors and shapes and using them on business cards, staff uniforms, or website designs. This approach provides a way patients can readily identify the practice.

Community Involvement

Making the community aware of the practice can go beyond doing a standard presentation at various community sites. It's good to begin with what you know and find ways to engage the audience. With kids, for example, games, fun animals to demonstrate tooth brushing, or simple, healthy foods to share with them can create an experience that they will love and remember. Presentations should fit the audience but include some interactive elements that make the encounter memorable. Upcycling can take any number of directions and should be constantly reviewed to determine what works and what doesn't and to make sure the presentation doesn't become stale.

Practice Elements

Upcycling can be done in the instruments used, in the imaging methods employed, in customer service areas, and even in the operatory and storage areas of the practice. It's important to keep current with instrument manufacturers and be willing to try new, upcycled instruments and methods. For imaging, dentistry is moving toward cone beam volumetric tomography (3D). Other methods are also being developed to make x-rays safer and more precise.

Customer service should be upcycled constantly, seeking to be creative, thoughtful, and fresh. This can include any aspects