



THE DAILY GRIND

DRILLING DEEPER INTO DENTISTRY

Maintain Balance in Your Practice During the Hectic Holidays

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It's the holidays! A season of cheer — and, for many of us, a season of rushing around and stressing out. For those in the dental field, this seasonal sentiment especially applies when it comes to patients who call the office to schedule appointments during an already-packed December or to those who have left pending restorative treatments until their last possible chance to utilize insurance benefits for the year. We skip lunches to squeeze patients in. We or stay late to squeeze patients in. The list of hectic holiday dental scenarios goes on and on, and it happens every year! So how are we able to do it?

I find one of the best ways is to be doubly-focused on patient satisfaction during the holidays, but keep everything balanced and reasonable. One of the main philosophical pillars of our practice is to focus on patient care and satisfaction. We take tremendous pride when a patient mentions how impressed they are with just how many ways we “go the extra mile.” While a patient-driven philosophy is essential, so are realistic expectations and the overall sanity of all parties involved. This includes dentists, staff and patients. Remember that you cannot — and will not — be able to please

everyone all the time, especially at this time of year.

It is the responsibility of everyone involved to keep in balance with the volume and magnitude of what is being requested. Dentists should keep in mind that your dental team cannot treat nine weeks of patient volume in the final month of the year. Keep your special scheduling requests within reason. Staff should keep in mind that patients are just like the rest of us. They procrastinate, and sometimes things get away from them. You should try to schedule as efficiently as possible, and always be open and honest with patients. If you're squeezing them in, let them know. If you're requesting they alter their appointment time so another patient can be seen, let them know. Transparency is a good policy all year — but particularly during the holidays.

Patients should keep in mind that your dental team members are human beings with families and busy schedules. They should respect an office's posted hours of operation. Each year, at this same time of year, I am amazed by the increase in inquiries from patients as to why my office is not open all seven days of the week.

If the volume and requests are out of balance between the three entities, the dental practice machine starts to break down. Unhappy and unsatisfied providers, staff and patients do not make for a well-oiled practice machine, and the overall quality of the practice can suffer. These situations can resonate far into the new year if not addressed and corrected. Remember, a dental practice is a complex organism that is as much relationship-based as it is science-based. Treat others the way you would like to be treated, and rarely will you go wrong. Happy holidays!

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