

Medical Office Communication Basics

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Comfort

Being comfortable, extroverted, and fully attentive to your patient is vital during your interaction. A doctor who is uncomfortable or shy around others will have difficulty instilling confidence. On the other hand, raising a doctor's ability to feel comfortable with patients improves the ability to gain patients' respect.

Effectively Delivering Communication

The key to making sure you have been heard and understood is speaking clearly, using the most effective amount of volume, which is slightly louder than a normal speaking voice, and speaking slowly. Deliver what you say with complete confidence and your message will have a more productive effect. An empathetic, strongly interested tone is a must.

If you are not sure whether you have been heard, ask! Continuing to communicate past something that was not heard or understood will cause your patient to feel confused and lose confidence.

Listening Skills

Listening attentively is an underrated and vital component of effective patient relations. Imagine a patient calling your office and describing her needs to an intake person who doesn't listen to what she said. This is not helpful in

building a practice. It is essential for patients to know that they have been heard and understood. You achieve this with a clear acknowledgment. It is bad manners, however, to cut a person off with a pre-acknowledgment. Interrupting patients is a common practice by doctors and staff and, unfortunately, always results in some degree of upset. Therefore, always wait until the person is through speaking before responding.

You can also cause an upset when you fail to acknowledge what a patient says. This is because the individual will think you did not listen. Many relations are hurt because of poor listening skills. This is because failure to listen causes disagreement, and disagreements cause patients to change medical providers. The key to good listening skills is to place full attention to the person talking. When you find yourself having difficulty focusing on a patient's comments, the patient likely uttered something that was not understood. Never be embarrassed to ask for clarification.

To a significant degree, your patients base their degree of satisfaction on the demonstrated communication skills by you and your staff. Time and again, our surveys have revealed this. This is true for all medical practices.

The Communication Formula

There is a Communications Formula. Few marketers know this, although some of the better ones apply it by instinct or accident. It

is a formula as powerful, predictable and clear as Newton's Law of Gravity. It is simply this: Communication is equal to understanding. You cannot have one without the other. Ideal communication entails transferring an idea from one person to another in such a way that the originator's idea is completely understood by the receiver.

Can poor communication destroy patient retention?

Communication and understanding are not absolutes. This means you cannot achieve perfect understanding and communication. Thus, the goal of marketing communications is to achieve the closest you can to perfect communication, as the closer you come to attaining ideal communication, the more effective results you will achieve.

To reach this goal, you must dissect communication and understanding down to their basic components. These are agreement and affinity. Agreement is what is real to an individual based on his viewpoint, experiences, and values. Here is an example of how your medical office could violate agreement and ruin a relationship with a patient.

A patient rushes from her place of employment to get to her doctor's office. She manages to arrive five minutes early, signs in and the receptionist asks her to have a seat. Ten minutes later, she approaches the receptionist to ask how much longer she will have to

wait and explains she will soon need to return to work. The receptionist apathetically replies it should be no more than a few more minutes. The patient waits another twenty minutes and the staff ignores her. Thus, she becomes annoyed and walks out. When she arrives back

at her office, she complains to her coworkers about her negative experience.

Affinity is the degree of liking, interest, and desire, or degree of willingness to be close to someone or something. Affinity is synonymous with emotion. In the above example, the patient was in disagreement with the way she was treated. As a result of being ignored, her affinity dropped and she decided to distance herself from that practice. She never again communicated with that medical office.

Crucial Laws of Communication

The greater the level of agreement, the greater the level of affinity. Conversely, the lower the level of agreement, the lower the level of affinity. Therefore, the greater the level of agreement and affinity, the higher the level of communication and understanding. **THIS IS THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT POINT IN ALL COMMUNICATIONS.** Why? Because all you need to do is ensure your patients with your communications and actions. If they do, you will automatically raise their affinity, communication, and understanding. Thus, you will boost your patient satisfaction, improve retention, increase patient satisfaction, and will strengthen your reputation.

So, how do you know your target market will be in agreement with your message? You need to comprehend exactly how they think. If you have any uncertainties about their viewpoints, you will need to conduct surveys. If you want to know what questions to ask, contact us.

When we work with clients, we work to ensure you and your staff always demonstrate excellent communication skills. Thus, we can promote this heavily and make promises in this regard that your competitors would likely not be able to match without obviously lying.