

Providing Your Patient With A Satisfactory
Office Experience - A Staff
Perspective

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Many Factors Contribute To Patient Satisfaction

- Initial phone experience with your staff
- Length of time before appointment
- Physical appearance of your office
- How the patient is greeted
- Offer to help, answer questions
- Length of time waiting to be seen
- Assistant, staff interaction with the patient
- Doctor interaction with the patient
- Interaction after the visit
- If there is a complication with treatment, the patient perception of how you deal with it

Some Benefits Of Increased Patient Satisfaction

- Better patient compliance
- Improved treatment outcomes
- Recommendations by word of mouth to other patients, caregivers
- Reduced risk of litigation

So how does the patient office experience transition from positive to negative?

What a wonderful doctor !



I can't stand this place !



Three Greatest Reasons For A Poor Patient Experience

- Poor communication, bedside manner (Doctor and staff both)
- Poor staff training, lack of realization about how staff/patient interaction affects the office experience
- Poor assessment of the patient and/or family expectations of care

Poor Communication Is The #1 Problem

Communication Involves Interaction

The interaction triad

1. Staff/patient interaction
2. Doctor/patient interaction
3. Doctor/staff interaction

Lets First Analyze Staff/Patient Interaction



The first element of the communication triad

Improving Staff/Patient Interaction

The Waiting Room Experience

- Reception is the hardest position in the office
- Receptionist must have good communication skills, multitask well under pressure
- The patient is immediately and cheerfully greeted
- Don't be condescending if the patient didn't fill out their forms, offer to help with paperwork if needed
- Office HIPPA policy
- Remember other patients are listening, observing, forming opinions about how the patient is dealt with
- If there is a long wait, courteously explain this and ask if this will be okay
- Explain you will keep the patient informed about progress

Improving Staff/Patient Interaction

Making The Appointment

- Receptionist on the phone provides greeting, thank you for calling the our office, provides first name, how can I help you
- Cheerful but professional
- Act like you appreciate their call, make it clear that the office is always willing to help with insurance, billing questions
- Multiple calls at once, ask the person if they don't mind being placed on hold, remember to get back to the person on hold ASAP and thank them for waiting
- Explain about forms they will be receiving to fill out prior to the visit
- Try to accommodate the patients schedule in setting up the appointment
- Explain that they will receive a reminder call prior to their visit

Improving Staff/Patient Interaction

Taking The Patient To The Treatment room

- Assistant should be courteous, professional
- Be aware of privacy issues
- Introduce yourself, greet family members as well
- Explain your role in the process of patient care
- If there will be a wait for the Doctor, make sure this is acceptable, check in on them frequently, update them honestly on how long the wait will be, offer any assistance



Improving Staff/Patient Interaction

Taking The History

- Explain to the patient what information you need to obtain
- Be a good listener, try to limit interrupting the patient
- Notify staff if a procedure may be indicated that needs prior insurance authorization
- Pass on pertinent observations to the Doctor
- Have empathy, don't be a machine
- Limit any personal comments or opinions about previous care if received, especially if the patient is dissatisfied

Improving Staff/Patient Interaction

Assistant Follow up care Once The Doctor Has Finished

- Explain that you are following through with the Doctor's instructions and exactly what is to be done
- If the patient has medical questions, refer them to the Doctor
- Do not give opinions regarding treatment or what the Doctor said
- Render treatment expeditiously, try not to have the patient wait too long
- If there will be a wait, explain this to them

Improving Staff/Patient Interaction

Patient Leaving The Office

- Thank the patient for their patronage
- Ask if they have any questions
- If there are written instructions that they have them
- Explain prescriptions or scheduled tests will be taken care of and patient will be contacted
- If there is dissatisfaction, with discretion attempt to determine why, pass this on to the Doctor
- Determine from the Doctor if a follow up visit is needed, and schedule this
- Explain that any prior authorization for future treatment or tests will be taken care of



Improving Staff/Patient Interaction

Post – Visit Follow up

- Call patient to inquire if their office visit was satisfactory
- Confirm reappointment
- Confirm scheduling of any tests or test results already available

Problems Encountered With Staff/Patient Interaction ?

- What Are Your Experiences?
 - Setting the appointment
 - reception of the patient
 - transport to the treatment room
 - interview prior to Drs. Visit
 - Dr. is finished
 - patient leaving the office
 - patient post visit follow up
- patient
- assistant initial
- assistant follow up care once

The Fix : A Bond Between Patient And Staff Established By Professionalism, Empathy And Concern For Patient Welfare

Improving Doctor/Patient Interaction

The second element in the communication triad

- Some things your Doctor needs to be aware of
- Although not necessarily your concern, you can sometimes help to facilitate better communication between Doctor and patient

Improving Doctor/Patient Interaction

- Problems start if the patient perceives that there is a lack of caring
- This could be on the initial visit, subsequent visits or when dealing with complications
- Very difficult to re – establish that bond when broken

Improving Doctor/Patient Interaction

Some reasons for erosion of the Doctor/patient bond

- Inadequate amount of time the Doctor spends with the patient
- Doctor not attentive or condescending to the patient or family
- Doctor deserts the patient if complications
- Doctor devalues the patient and/or family views
- Remember your Doctor's knowledge and experience won't matter if he/she cannot communicate with the patient

Improving Doctor/Patient Interaction

The Fix

- The Doctor should work at building the trust that the patient needs to have



Improving Doctor/Patient Interaction

Obvious ways for your Doctor to build trust

- Shake hands and introduce yourself to the patient and family
- “How can we help you today” greeting tells the patient that you are enlisting them as a treatment partner
- Review the chart/nursing notes prior to seeing the patient
- Do not interrupt, let them fully explain their problems...be a good listener
- Assess the patient for literacy and understanding of their condition
- Use lay terms when appropriate

Improving Doctor/Patient Interaction

Not So Obvious

- Avoid computer documentation while seeing the patient
- Allow enough time for the exam (studies show that the patient needs at least 150 sec. to express his or her concerns...Beckman and Frankel, 1984), **physicians underestimate the amount of time they think they spent with a patient SEVEN fold**
- Educate the patient, this will reduce non - adherence and dissatisfaction, and increase treatment outcomes...(Educating and enlisting patients, Geoffrey Gordon MD, FACP and Daniel Duffy MD, FACP)
- Treat the patient AS YOU would want to be treated
- Treatment success is synonymous with patient compliance

Improving Doctor/Patient Interaction

Patient Compliance Leads To Patient Satisfaction

- Simplifying the treatment regimen (compliance doubles if treatments are b.i.d. rather than q.i.d.
- Separate the problems, address one at a time
- Try to tailor the treatment according to the patients life style, time table, work/family/personal needs
- Have family care giver present if possible
- Provide written instructions, review them with the patient and have them sign them
- Describe what to expect with treatment, adverse effects, and have the patient explain back their understanding
- Brochures, visual aids
- Above all, if there is a complication, address it as soon as appropriate in a honest and thorough manner

Improving Doctor/Patient Interaction

Self assessments the Doctor and assistant should both make

- What impression do you make when you initially engage with the patient?
- How do you introduce yourself?
- Do you check the chart in advance?
- Are you a good listener?
- How much time do you take with the patient?
- Does the patient leave satisfied with their care?
- Do you have a New Patient guide for patients?
- Periodic review of patient internet impressions
- Do you include the patient as part of the healthcare team
- Provide written instructions and review them with the patient?

Improving Doctor/Staff Interaction

The third element in the communication triad

- Doctor/staff interaction has direct and indirect ramifications on patient satisfaction
- The quality of this interaction is more a function of the Doctor, who sets the tone for a harmonious office environment

Improving Doctor/Staff Interaction

Indirect Ramifications of Poor Doctor/Staff Interaction

- Can create a negative patient perception of the Doctor and the practice
- Staff members may not feel comfortable in approaching the Doctor with a problem
- Poor staff performance in tasks the Doctor doesn't see on a day to day basis
- Pervasive negativity which can be a malignancy to an office
- Lack of loyalty infectious to other staff members

Direct Ramifications of Poor Doctor/Staff Interaction

- Mistakes in processing information can be deadly
 - medical errors account for more accidental deaths than all other types of accident combined
- Reduced office harmony and increased stress on staff and the Doctor
- Reduced patient volume, practice stagnation
- Referral sources dry up
- Increased risk of litigation

Improving Doctor/Staff Interaction

The Fix

- Periodically step back and look at yourself and how you perform through the eyes of patients and the Doctor
- Be positive and upbeat about the practice and your position as a team member
- Don't let office stress get the best of you
- Compliment staff members when things are done properly
- Be willing to help out/fill in for a team member if necessary
- Always be aware of how and why things are to be done - Lab results, messages, sterile technique, universal precautions, call from a patient with a question or problem, request for records

Improving Doctor/Staff Interaction - More Suggestions...

- Your office should hold regular staff meetings
- Address any problems as soon as possible
- Complimenting your fellow employees on good work helps improve efficiency and morale
- Your office management should foster a relaxed but professional work atmosphere
- Appreciate the importance of the responsibility and trust your Doctor has in you as a team member
- Understand that a slack approach to your job creates sloppiness, mistakes, problems with delivery of care, and is DANGEROUS
- Inquire if your office has written guidelines to follow that describe your office role and performance expectations

Improving Doctor/Staff Interaction

Your Doctor Sets The Tone

- Negativity breeds negativity
- Lack of appreciation of a good job means it may not happen again
- Not addressing a problem usually makes it get worse “ostrich syndrome”
- If the Doctor doesn't provide feedback to the staff, there will be a lack of direction
- Staff appearance and performance is a reflection of the Doctor

So We See That Effective Communication Has Positive Impact In Multiple Ways...

- Improved treatment outcomes
- Less stress, actually enjoying your work
- Smoothly running, vigorously growing practice
- Greater accuracy in diagnosis
- Better patient compliance
- Improved trust
- Greater patient satisfaction
- Decreased risk of litigation

Doctor /Staff Interaction

Your Experiences And Observations

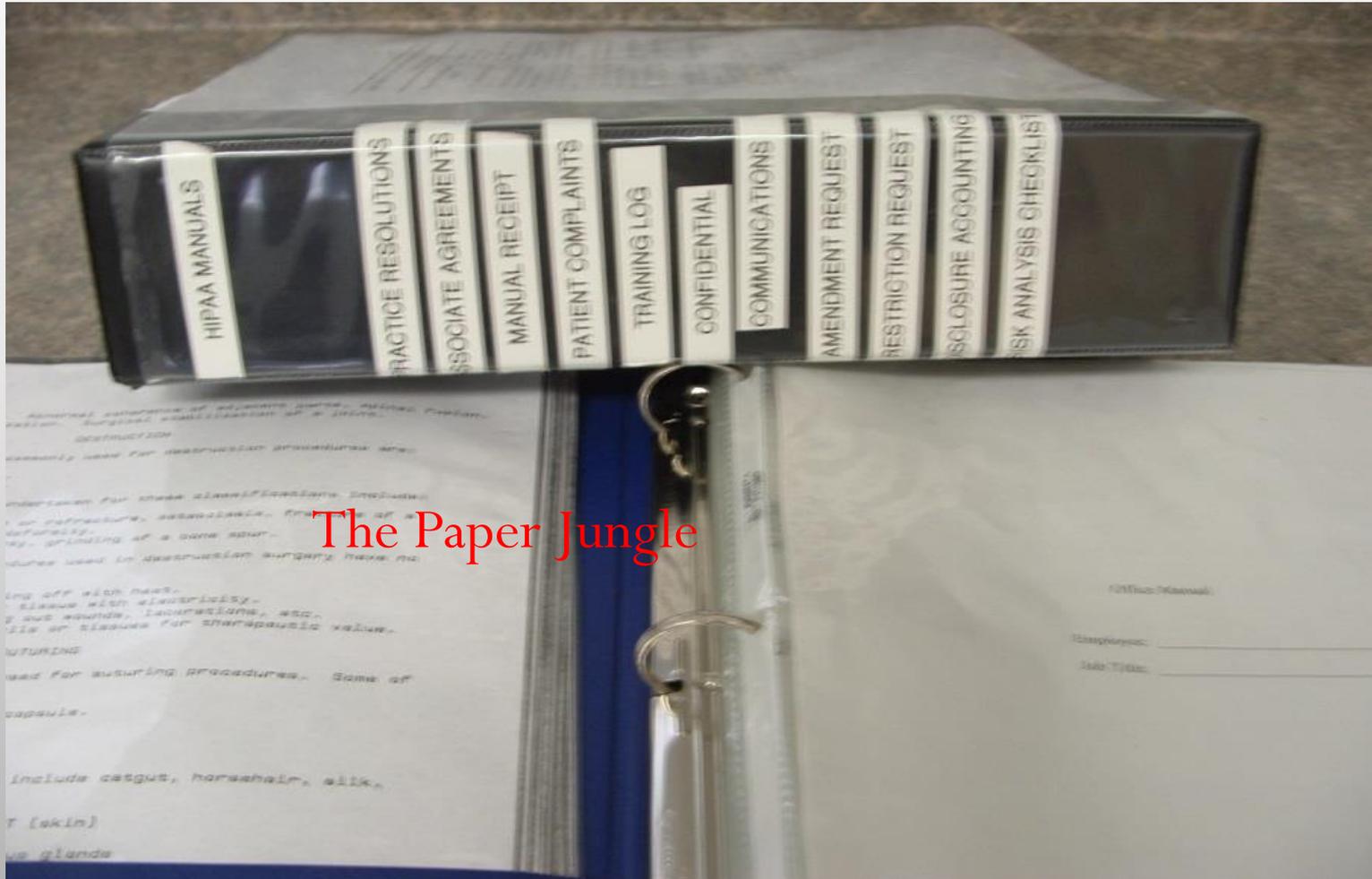
- Do you have an occurrence report mechanism?
- A staff complaint resolution process?
- A tracking system regarding labs, patient follow up, missed appointments, cancellations, medication refills
- Frequent staff turnover?

The Satisfied Patient - Dealing With Treatment Complications

All offices have them...how they are dealt with is the key

- Complications do occur even in the best of treatment situations
- You might be the first to become aware that the patient has a problem (patient is afraid or embarrassed to tell the Doctor)
- Whatever the situation, always be sympathetic, non - confrontational, understanding
- Never provide your opinion, that is the Doctor's job
- If you are at fault, don't delay in informing the Doctor or appropriate staff member
- Keep excellent records

Documentation



The Paper Jungle

Does your office retain these ?

- Record of treatment - dictation and transcription, voice activated technology, SOAP notes
- Informed consent
- Procedure specific post operative going home instructions
- Orthotic informed consent
- Telephone call record
- Diagnostic test form
- Medication flow sheet
- Patient financial policy
- HIPPA declaration
- Physician/patient termination letter
- Authorization to disclose health information
- Refusal of care/leaving against medical advice
- Diabetic/PVD patient consent for treatment
- General agreement to treatment
- Surgical authorization

In Summary....

- There are many factors that contribute to the patient's perception of their office experience
- Effective communication is a key to providing your patient with satisfaction
- This communication is built upon interaction between the patient, the office staff and the Doctor
- Analyzing the methods of patient, staff and Doctor interaction allows for a determination of communication effectiveness
- Self analysis of your communication skills may help to improve the patient's office experience

Thank you !

