Four ways to increase case acceptance

By Roger Levin, DDS

"A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty."
— Winston Churchill

E veryone wants 2009 to be a bet- ter year than 2008. Well, here's how: improve your system for presenting treatment to patients — especially larger need-based and elective cases. When I say that to dentists at my Total Practice Succ- cess™ seminars, a few attendees will inevitably respond, "I'm doing everything I can, but nothing seems to work. About the same percentage of patients accept treatment year-to-year no matter what I do." This is when I start asking ques- tions about their case presentations:

▪ Is your team involved? Does your hygienist regularly edu- cate patients about all practice services?
▪ Do you emphasize patient ben- efits right from the get-go?
▪ How up-to-date are your mar- keting materials? Do they pro- mote all of your services, espe- cially cosmetic dentistry and implants?
▪ Do you offer flexible financial options to every patient?

As you can probably guess, the majority of the responses are in the negative. That's because most people, including dentists, have difficulty accurately evaluating their performance. We all want to believe that we're doing the best that we can. Of course, we often are, but sometimes we are not. Admittedly, changing can be difficult. It often takes a major event, such as the worst economy since the Great Depression, to shake us out of our complacency. While the past several months have certainly been a wake-up call, this is no time to dwell on the nega- tive. We're starting a new year — a time brimming with possibilities — so, let's focus on the one indis- putable fact that I can't emphasize enough to dentists everywhere: Your practice is the best investment you ever made.

Now is the time to re-invest in your practice by improving your system for case presentation. Levin Group helps our clients increase case acceptance with a systematized approach called Greenlight Case Presentation. These four “green light” action steps can help you do the same.

Promote comprehensive dentistry

Successful practices take a long- term view of patients' oral health. Most patients are potential candi- dates for any number of traditional and elective procedures, yet too many practices take a shortsighted view and focus exclusively on the patients' current needs and treat- ment. Yes, practices should address a patient's immediate concerns, but there also should be a focus on life- long dentistry that takes a compre- hensive view of the patient's dental future needs and wants. Unfortu- nately, a high percentage of dental appointments are still single-tooth treatments. Offering comprehensive care to all patients can result in a significant increase in production and profitability.

Focus on benefits right from the start

Dentists love the technical aspects of treatment, but most patients couldn't care less. They just want to know how treatment will ben- efit them. Let's take implants, for example. Patients want to hear how implants will improve their smile, prevent bone loss, increase their quality of life, etc. It's not that clini- cal explanations should be avoided entirely, but it's just that they should be de-emphasized. Save technical details for later in the case presenta- tion, and keep them to a minimum unless the patient asks specific ques- tions. Remember, patients generally have one thing in mind: "What's in it for me?" Only by focusing on benefits can patients become truly motivated. Without motivation, it's doubtful patients will move forward with treatment.

Educate patients

Just as billion-dollar corporations run the same TV commercials repeat- edly to create product awareness, a practice must also educate patients about all of its services multiple times during each and every visit. Case presentation shouldn't be sole- ly the doctor's responsibility, each team member must do his or her part to educate and motivate patients about practice services. In addition, marketing materials — brochures, posters, infomercials on monitors, etc. — should be featured in patient areas throughout the practice.

Present flexible financial options

Practices can dramatically increase case acceptance by offering a broad array of financial options to all patients. Many doctors make the mistake of assuming which patients may or may not be able to afford certain cases. Case acceptance dra- matically increases when patients see the value in the recommended treatment and are presented with a variety of flexible financial options that suit their budget. Levin Group recommends that practices use these options:

▪ 5 percent discount for full pay- ment in advance for larger cases,
▪ credit cards,
▪ half upfront, half before comple- tion of treatment,
▪ outside or third-party financing.

Conclusion

Case acceptance drives practice success. These four action steps can help you and your team get more patients to say “yes” to recom- mended treatment. Combat a tough economy by increasing your case acceptance and give the green light to more success in 2009!

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