

Timeless Success Practices

by Dr. Brent Detelich



The primary focus of most chiropractors across America is on increasing new patients, and they should; it's crucial to a practice's success. But patient retention and compliance are also crucial to succeed in today's chiropractic marketplace. One leads to the other. If you effectively manage your patients and they comply, you are far more likely to achieve retention. The need for an increase in more new patients is greatly reduced when you begin to retain a higher percentage of the patients you already persuaded to walk through your door in the first place. If you don't manage to keep 50 percent of your patients coming back from year to year, the pressure to attract brand new patients is greatly increased. In addition, retaining patients longer allows for more complete care and better results, which increases word-of-mouth promotion. You will always need to keep new patients walking in the door, as there is attrition in every kind of business, but you sure can reduce the pressure by increasing retention.

First things first – the phone

Whether we are talking about new patients or patient retention, the beginning of your success – or lack thereof – starts with how the phone calls proceed. There is nothing more fundamental than how calls are handled. Not only can you miss out on generating new patients by the mishandling of incoming phone calls, but you can also lose your current patients if phone calls are done

improperly. A few very simple rules to keep in mind:

1. Attitude, attitude, attitude. How is the demeanor of the person answering the phone? And, I don't mean just in the words spoken; if they are not genuinely pleasant and positive, the vibe comes through. If the CA isn't smiling as he or she answers the call, that won't cut it.

Whether we are talking about new patients or patient retention, the beginning of your success – or lack thereof – starts with how the phone calls proceed.

They should have a legitimate smile while speaking and mean it. If your front desk CA isn't naturally smiling and positive, you don't have the right person for this area. A truly friendly and positive attitude in that position makes your practice run smoothly and efficiently.

2. Keep it simple. No need for long introductions – people are busy. "Smith's Family Chiropractic, this is Ashley," should be fine. I know some practices include cute ad-ons, like, "It's a marvelous Monday at Smith's Family Chiropractic. This is Ashley. How may I be of help to you on this wonderful day?" That's too much. People don't want to wait for such a long introduction. Believe it or not, people appreciate your being quick as much as they do your being pleasant.

3. If your front desk isn't always ready to take notes, because they have too many other functions or are not prepared, you have a major

problem. If you ever hear your CA say, "Wait a minute, I have to find something to write that down" – or wait for the computer to turn on – you have issues. The potential patient – or current patient – should never be made wait, ever.

4. This is related to the above, but always have the complete, current schedule at the ready. No one wants

to wait as the CA flips through pages or screens to find open times and dates. Operating quickly sends a message to the patient that you value and respect their time.

Offer a personal greeting

In the movie, "Anchorman," Will Ferrell's character says, "I am in a glass case of emotion" while lamenting in a phone booth. You don't want this to be your CA. In other words, some practices are set up so the first thing a patient sees is a sliding glass door. Don't do this. It makes the environment seem cold and unfriendly. You want the experience to feel warm and inviting, and sliding glass doors don't emit the right tone. The patient should be greeted openly and met with a warm hand shake and eye-to-eye contact. This is a universal human nature law – physical handshake and eye to eye contact with a smile. If your current front desk CA isn't capable of this, for whatever reason, you need to change personnel. That

initial greeting sets the tone for the entire visit. Even if you are a warm and wonderful person, yourself, you still must ensure that initial greeting – as soon as they step through your door – is inviting and creates a “feel good” environment. Always encourage and empower your staff to do whatever is necessary to make your patients comfortable and happy.

Another “touching” moment

When doing the actual adjustment, keep your attention fully on the patient, and begin a conversation that encompasses a dialogue about the patient getting better. Do not ask questions at this time, just palpate and adjust. I know some may not agree on this, but chatting is for another time. If they do want to discuss something, make an appointment for that discussion. It’s kind of like what some say about the bedroom. The primary use is to sleep. If you begin doing a lot of reading or TV watching, you may end up having trouble falling asleep; same theory. The therapy room is for treatment, not chit chat.

Collection with confidence

For some practitioners, collecting can be uncomfortable. I even know some stories of chiropractors with a “collection box” on their wall where patients decide how much they feel comfortable paying. This is mind blowing. Look, you went to chiropractic school for a reason. You believe in the difference you make in your patients’ lives. You believe your care offers value. So, don’t feel shy about asking for fair payment for your service. Do so early and with certainty and confidence. This is not a case of you asking for something for nothing, it is a “fair exchange.” You provide health, and they exchange payment for said services.

You really shouldn’t “spit ball” with collections. You should create – and scrupulously apply – payment policies. A lot of practices have no concrete policies and procedures on collections (or they don’t enforce the policies they do have). Collect on

the day of service, don’t just bill them down the road, as chances are, you will never see a dime for the work you do.

Name that name

There is nothing more powerful than saying a patient’s name. You should do so a minimum of five times for every visit. This helps build a lasting relationship; hopefully one where the patient keeps coming back. According to Dale Carnegie, “A person’s name is to him or her the sweetest and most important sound in any language.” It is the utmost in respect. If you bother to know a person’s name, it means they are important enough for you to commit it to memory. Your patients will feel that you are more caring and interested in their well-being.

Summary

1) Everyone wants more new patients, but if we do better at patient compliance and retention, we don’t need as many new patients. It’s all about balance. 2) A successful practice starts with how

your phone calls are handled. It is your lifeblood. You can’t afford anything but the best, most friendly, and professional phone conversations. 3) Don’t place your CA greeter behind glass. Have them shake hands with the patient and make friendly eye contact, and not from behind a sliding glass door. 4) The human touch is powerful, and use your therapy rooms for treatment, not to chat. 5) Collect on the day of treatment; don’t get stuck with bad debt. Collect with confidence – you are worth your price. 6) Speak each patient’s name out loud at least five times per visit. This builds lasting relationships.

About The Author — Dr. Detelich attended Palmer College of Chiropractic in Davenport, Iowa, graduating in 1971. He currently owns Physicians Vendor Services, a company that connects practitioners with vendors that have special products and/or services that fit into chiropractic, medical and/or integrated clinics throughout the country. He can be reached at 310-902-2634 or email drjcdetelich@yahoo.com or visit <http://physiciansvendorservices.com>.

Yesterday's Scoliosis Treatment:



Waiting.



Bracing.



Surgery.

Today's Scoliosis Treatment:



Day one.



Twenty weeks.



Forty weeks.

The better alternative to waiting, bracing, surgery...

CLEAR Scoliosis Institute

www.CLEAR-Scoliosis-Institute.org
866-663-7030