What's In It For Me?

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We recently had the pleasure to speak with a group of podiatric medical residents in New York City to discuss practice management. The universal question was "What is the most effective way to secure a position as an associate in an established practice." Mike Crosby, a Vice-President from Podiatry Insurance Company of America (PICA) gave the most common-sense response to this question we have ever heard: thinking from the perspective of the hiring doctor or anyone who is in the position to purchase. Simply said, look to answer the question from their perspective of "What is in it for me?"

When communicating with your patients, simply remember that in most cases they will be thinking "What is in it for me?" Why should I have that injection that hurts? Why do I need custom orthotic devices when I can buy an arch support at the local pharmacy? Why did I need to have surgery that is painful and will take me out of commission for six weeks? The answer to these questions should be addressed from the perspective of "What is in it for me?" Your patients need to clearly and definitively understand that your treatment plan has the most important person in their life as #1 in your mind…. them!

The injection is to allow "them" to play ball with their children; a custom-made orthotic device provides the best care for "them"; and surgery is so "they" do not have increasing pain and deformity. The key here is the "them's" and "they's." If your patients can identify with the services and treatments you advise, they will make a logic-based decision to have them performed. The confidence in your presentation and recommendations then becomes the next key factor in the patient accepting your plan. Do not expect them to believe if you do not appear to believe.

The attention to the "moments of truth", that brief encounter that will ultimately define what your patient perceives as their benefit from this exchange is critical to a patient satisfaction and accepting your treatment plan.. Every brief interaction that the doctor and staff has with a patient is an opportunity to sweeten or sour the relationship. Patients often reflect that they do not care how much you know until they first know you care.

It is important to manage and focus on the moments of truth to achieve your highest measure of patient satisfaction. A patient cycle survey can help to identify and evaluate the moments of truth in your office. Each staff member should be responsible for a short list of "moments of truth" to monitor and note over a one-month period. The "moments" should be assessed from the first phone call by a patient to their being discharged. A list of positive and negative "moments" should be kept and discussed at an office meeting at the end of the one-month period. Two weeks later, meet for each physician and staff member to give specific suggestions in areas that necessitate improvement. Regular assessments should then be reviewed at office meetings to monitor areas that need improvement.

It is often the 5% that makes 95 % of the difference. Attention to details is what can give the competitive edge in your community. Simple things like the quality of copies, fresh paint, no scuffmarks on the wall, that little extra "have a nice day" or "thank you" when a patient leaves the office, name tags on each staff member, etc., are what make a considerable difference. The natural anxiety that a new patient has when visiting your office can be significantly reduced by paying attention to the moments of truth. The result will be greater patient retention as well as a more enjoyable work environment . Now is the moment!

Call it selfish, self-centered, and egocentric or whatever you want, but the bottom line is your patients will always ask themselves "what is in it for me?" So do what we do best and let them know that everything we do is "all for them"!

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