

## Jennifer de St. Georges' Solution to Taking Control of Confirming Doctor and Hygiene Appointments (2<sup>nd</sup> side)

JdSG research has shown that dental practices do have the power and ability to save hours a day, which many practices currently spend confirming both Doctor and Hygiene appointments, even those hygiene appointments pre-booked months ago. Feedback that JdSG has received across North America has proved that our system is very effective in reducing No Shows and Cancel Short Notice Appointments.

**Question:** Why does a dental practice confirm appointments?

**Answer:** Because dentists feel that it is a necessary service

**Question:** What does confirming appointments lead to?

**Answer:** Cancel Short Notice (Patient: *"I'm so glad that you called, I have been meaning to call you for days"*)

### **JdSG's Research shows that:**

1. Practices not confirming appointments have a *lower* NS rate than practices confirming
2. Practices confirming appointments, have a higher No Show rate than practices that don't

**Question:** When to educate a NP as to what he/she can expect from the practice?

**Answer:** At the New Patient Financial Consultation appointment

### **Verbal Skills:**

*"In our practice we do not confirm appointments. Our patients have told us that they don't like having their busy schedules interrupted, and they are quite prepared to take responsibility for keeping their own appointments."*

**PAUSE for 2-3 seconds to allow the patient to respond in one of two ways:**

### **Response #1:**

*Patient: "No problem, I don't need my appointments confirmed. Once I have written them in my organizer, these appointments are cast in stone."*

**(JdSG goal is for 90% approx. of patients to fall into this category)**

OR

### **Response #2**

*Patient: "I have a major problem remembering appointments, can you call me?"*

*Staff: "It will be **our pleasure** to provide this special service."*

**(JdSG goal would be for 10-15% of patients to request this service)**

### **Outcome:**

- Now you are chasing the patients around town who specifically requested your Confirmation Service, while not annoying the vast majority of patients who did not request, do not need and do not appreciate the interruption.
- Create system (chart and/or computer to visually remind staff confirming service needed.



### **Your Confirmation and NO SHOW policies are linked.**

At the Financial Consultation, you need to educate each new patient on what he/she should to do when they need to *'change their appointment'*. Don't call this activity a *'No Show'*, that is a negative. We talk about a patient's need to *'change their appointment'*.

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1. "As long as we receive at least 48\* hours notice of your need to change your appointment, there will be absolutely no charge." (This is taking a positive, rather than a negative approach.)
2. "However, should we not hear from you at least 48 hours prior to your scheduled appointment of your need to reschedule, there will be a \$XX charge for each half hour missed."
3. "We are sure that this will not be an issue".

- \*When offering 48 hours, research shows an office usually experiences 24 hour notice
- When offering 24 hours, you'll be lucky to hear from them by midnight the evening before!

### **JdSG policy:**

1. All new patients are told both verbally and in writing, at the Financial Consultation
2. Approach needs to be pro-active not re-active. *Inform before you perform, no surprises*
3. \$50 for each half-hour missed, 3 consecutive NS's and patient is invited to find a practice with a more flexible schedule. (handling in a legally responsible manner)
4. 1st No Show is always a No Charge (free, complimentary) Good PR and marketing)

**Question:** Is purpose of NS charge to create profit center or income source? **Answer:** NO

**Goal:** Patients to either call in advance and change appointment or patient keeps appointment.

### **Educating Patients of Record on your Updated Confirmation and Need to Change an Appointment Policy:**

#### **3 Ways not to do it:**

1. Send out negative letter. You can seriously damage a practice by informing patients of such policy changes in a manner the patient perceives as both negative and self-serving.
2. Tell each patient over the phone. You can come across on the telephone as being self-serving and not interested in offering patients good service. One has ability to say things in person, with a smile, that simply do not come across in the same positive manner when stated on the phone. Also, you do not have the ability to read the patient's body language and immediately take care of any perceived misunderstandings.
3. Stop confirming appointments tomorrow and fail to tell your patients.  
You have got your patients dependent on your calls. In fact, when they miss their appointment and you finally make contact with them, they will remind you that it was your fault that they missed the appointment, as you did not remind them!

#### **The correct way to change from confirming to not confirming :**

1. Call each patient one more time. This includes both doctors' patients and hygiene patients who have been pre-booked. These patients have been used to getting your calls and are now relying on them. You can't stop 'cold turkey'.
2. Tell each patient in person. This is done at the administrative desk, at the end of the visit. The verbal skills are exactly the same as for the new patient, with just one change in the beginning of the sentence "We no longer confirm appointments... refer to script on page 1

#### **Recently bought an established practice?**

Don't make radical changes within the first 12 months. Wait until the majority of patients have met doctor and team.