

## Dental Treatment Coordinator

The development of a treatment coordinator role will provide a sophisticated mode of operation and smooth flow for the patient experience. Treatment recommendations do not fall through the cracks. Careful attention to detail is an ongoing process, and the follow-up necessary to encourage a person to move ahead with treatment is systematically done

Make a positive assumption - Assume that your patient has arrived at your office for your diagnosis and treatment plan  
Then make a positive assertion...“this is what we are going to do...”

### Treatment Coordinator – The Process

Enters the treatment plan into the computer  
Sets up presentation for patient  
Schedules appointments, including referral consultations if necessary  
Secures commitment to the treatment  
Secures financial commitment at the time of booking

### A sample job description might be:

- Participate in the new patient experience.
- Follow the patient through the treatment cycle
- Introduce treatment plans and facilitate flow.
- Gather information from the referring doctor and coordinate the telephone call between the doctors.
- (4)Participate in marketing projects within the practice and throughout the community
- Participate in the consultation appointment by backing up the doctor's recommendations and by answering questions that the patient might not ask of the doctor
- Discuss financial responsibilities and options and make firm financial arrangements.
- Work with the scheduling coordinator to appoint
- Follow-up with pre-estimates

### The New Patient

The New Patient Interview builds the foundation of your relationship. It is a critical point of influence in the service cycle. Patients will ultimately choose to get elective cosmetic services but first they must have developed a relationship with the dentist and his/her team. Enhancing case acceptance begins with the new patient examination and interview. Ideally, new patients should meet with your Treatment Coordinator first.

Objectives of the consultative New Patient Interview

- To provide an overview of the practice.
- To introduce your new patient welcome packet.
- To identify the source of the referral.

### Reassess Existing Patients

- Some of your patients will choose to accept treatment immediately and others may wait.
- Patients generally accept treatment when they value and want it.

### How does Treatment Coordination reduce no shows and short notice cancellations?

- Secure commitment to the treatment
- It doesn't lose its importance in the mind of the patient
- It becomes a priority
- There is a greater sense of urgency and need

### Track Your Treatment Plans

Enter all Treatment Plans into Your Computer Using Treatment Codes. If the recommended course of treatment changes then simply change the code. This will help you to maintain control over all planned treatment to ensure that nothing gets overlooked.

### Case Presentation

- To set the patient at ease you follow the following steps:
- Propose an Agenda
- State the Value to the Patient
- Check for Acceptance

A successful treatment consultation is one in which you and the patient make an informed, mutually beneficial decision to act on their clinical needs and emotional needs. As a professional, it is your job to direct and manage this consultative process so that this outcome is achieved. You reach mutually beneficial decisions through an open exchange of information that focuses on patient needs, values and desires.

You propose an agenda by saying what you'd like to do or accomplish during the visit. This sets a clear direction for your conversation and lets you establish a focus on the patient. You might say: *"What I'd like to do today is review the results of your examination, show you some pictures of your mouth so you can see what needs to be done."*

You want to make sure the patient accepts the agenda you've proposed and doesn't have anything else to add. You might ask: *"Is there anything else you'd like to cover?" - "How does that sound?"* Checking for acceptance gives you the information you need to use your time and the patients productively and ensure that you and the patient are in the same place. Allow patients to tell their story without interruption. Listening is one of the key communication skills, yet it is the one that receives little attention in formal education. It takes approximately 2 ½ minutes for a patient to tell their story

### Prejudging

Never prejudge your patient's ability and willingness to pay for your services. The patient's treatment needs cannot be dictated by their insurance coverage. When you prejudge your patient's willingness and ability to accept treatment recommendations, you are making the decision for them – consciously or subconsciously. Patients deserve and demand to know all of their options when making treatment decisions.

### Treatment Decisions

All decisions are based on emotion – you must appeal to lifestyle. Our challenge in dentistry is to change the basis of through from need to want. Decisions are based on emotion. The desire to have something that they imagine will create a certain outcome that they want. Decisions must be justified with logical rationale. Obstacles are overcome by the intensity of the emotional attachment. Patients proceed with treatment based on emotion and then justify it with logic. More buying decisions are based upon impressions and perceived need than on reason.

You want patients to make informed decisions with a sense of urgency about their health care while at the same time understanding the need for treatment based on an awareness of current and future consequences of their dental health issues. This should occur when their comprehension of necessary solutions is at their peak. **This occurs at the time of case presentation and diminishes considerably within 24 hours of leaving your office.**

### Total Value = Real value + Perceived value

Seeing is believing. Use Intra-oral cameras and visual aids. If a patient can see the problem, they are more likely to accept the solution."

Describe the Features, Benefits and Incentives of the Treatment - FBI

- The patient makes the decision based on the incentives

### Virtual Reality

Create a Virtual Reality for your patient. Get the patient to see the problem and solution – buy in. Create a crisis (sense of urgency). Use closure statements

### Show and Tell

Case acceptance depends on the patient owning the problem and your ability to communicate effectively.

Don't be afraid to use words like pus and infection. Patients do not care about periodontal disease or gingivitis. Discuss with the patient why there is a lack of symptoms, like perio disease. i.e. "Just like high blood pressure sometimes symptoms don't show up until it is too late."

## **Elevate Your Hygiene Team**

Dental hygienists are not just teeth cleaners!! Dental Hygienists are highly trained and *specialized therapists*, they are disease prevention therapists, periodontal therapists. You must believe in your own value and the value of your services before your patients will.

All major treatment plans should include a supportive periodontal therapy program. It helps to protect the patient's investment in their health, helps to prevent post-operative infection and continued osseointegration (for implants), helps reinforce the value of the treatment to the patient and elevates the roles of your hygiene team

Why Do Patients Cancel Hygiene Appointments? "It's o.k. to wait because it's just a cleaning, nothing hurts. The appointment doesn't have added value. Add value to the appointment by educating your patient on **prevention and supportive therapy!** Don't wait until it hurts – stop the spread of the existing disease and prevent future disease

Studies show that 65% of Restorative Production comes from the Hygiene Department What is the role of the treatment coordinator? Include a supportive periodontal therapy program as part of the overall treatment plan. The patient knows what to expect and is more likely to keep the hygiene appointments. Set up the supportive perio therapy program at the time of the consultation. Prepare the patient and help them see the value in the perio program – it protects their investment

## **Financial Arrangements**

Make clear and flexible arrangements at the time of booking. That way there are no surprises. Offer assistance with Insurance submissions without becoming the plan administrator

The key to collections is everyone in the team needs to believe in the services and the fees. Everyone on the team **MUST** believe that the care you are giving is of financial value as well as health care. The Treatment Coordinator must be capable of discussing fees and payment options with patients without being insurance driven

Break Free from the Insurance Addiction by examining your own prejudgments. Make your Practice Patient Centered and Not Insurance Driven. If your practice is insurance driven it is at risk. Patients will pay for what they **WANT AND VALUE**

- Insurance companies cannot diagnose and treat the patients according to their clinical needs
- The patients think that if their insurance doesn't cover the treatment it is not necessary
- The patient thinks that you control their dental benefit
- If dental benefits cease at the employer level, the patient thinks it's YOUR fault
- Co-payments are extremely difficult to collect and have a negative impact on you're A/R and cash flow
- You cannot waive co-payments – illegal and unethical (patients will try to convince you otherwise)

## **Offer a Payment Plan**

Affordability is the reason almost 50% of patients do not go forward with treatment<sup>1</sup> Studies have shown your treatment acceptance can rise as much as 30% when outside financing is available to patients and almost ½ of case presentations are not accepted due to lack of payment options. Offer an incentive for prepaying at time of booking

## **In-house Financing Makes it Easy for Your Patients to Pay**

- Real interest free financing
- You must have **WRITTEN** and signed payment agreement for extensive treatment plans
- Market this to your patient as an **interest free and service charge free loan**
- Establish payment methods either by pre-authorized credit card payments or pre-authorized debits

## **Patient's Questions – Overcoming Objections - Be prepared for tough questions with great answers**

- An objection is an opportunity to expand dialogue

## **I have insurance, why do I have a bill?**

“Although you have insurance, some procedures may not be covered.”

“Your level of insurance coverage is determined by the policy your employer selects.”

“Insurance plans are a great benefit to the patient. The plans are designed to defray the cost of treatment. The entire amount is not always covered. The patient usually bears some financial responsibility for the treatment.”

“We promise to base your treatment on your dental health needs, not on your insurance policy.”

“We will be pleased to help you in every way possible to gain the most from your benefit.”

“You have every reason to be concerned when it seems as if you’re not getting the dental benefits that you deserve. Our fees are consistent and are based on the suggested fee guide of the current year

If you are unhappy with your level of coverage, you may wish to address this with your employer.”

## **Will you bill the insurance company directly?**

“Your dental insurance is your benefit, but we will be happy to bill your insurance company electronically and you will receive your benefit in just a few days.” “We have several payment options for your convenience, they are...”

## **I have heard that this does not work. Are there other ways to treat this?**

Conflicting Information. Acknowledge and answer the question using a benefit. Recognize the patient’s dilemma

“I appreciate the time you took to research this. Unfortunately that treatment doesn’t work for all people because...”

## **Fear of Pain – is it going to hurt?**

“Today’s dentistry is virtually pain free. We do everything within our power to make sure the procedure is comfortable for you.”

Don’t lie to the patient or they will remember and resent you for it. Don’t deny their fear, it is their reality.

“I have heard stories too and naturally you are concerned. I will tell you that there may be some discomfort. What we do at this office to make it easier for you is...”

## **What will happen if I wait?**

Delaying Treatment - Stress the inconvenience involved if the patient needs to be seen on an emergency basis and he/she may have to see another dentist.

“The timing of the treatment is up to you. If you wait, the problem could occur at an even more inconvenient time.

“At this point in time, we can minimize the cost, discomfort and loss of tooth structure by restoring the tooth now, “when the decay is in the early stages. Postponing treatment could result in increased costs and make correction of the problem more difficult.”

## **I want a second opinion**

“Our goal at this office is for you to feel comfortable and confident with your treatment plan. If a second opinion will help you feel comfortable we urge you to seek one. Would you like a referral?”

## **Do You Guarantee Your Work?**

“When you are making this kind of investment that’s a reasonable question” “You seem concerned about how long the crown will last, is that right? (wait for the answer) “Many of the crowns that I have provided to patients have lasted a

lifetime, some have not. What I can guarantee is that I will provide the right crown for your needs, I will use the finest materials and I will select an excellent dental laboratory.

The difference between a crown that lasts a lifetime and one that does not is the person who takes care of the crown on a daily basis. I will provide you with home care instructions to help the crown last as long as possible.

### **Would you have this treatment if you were me?**

“That’s a good question. I would never recommend treatment that I wouldn’t want for myself or my family members. Here’s what you could ask yourself to be sure that you are making the best decision – Will I be happy with the expected results, do I understand both the benefits and the risks, have all my questions been answered?”

### **Why do I have to pay for an examination, he didn’t do anything?**

“In a clinical exam, the doctor diagnoses not just tooth decay and gum disease, but he/she looks for signs of potentially serious health conditions, including bone infections and oral cancer. It’s the most important part of preventive dentistry, which means keeping you health and your dental costs affordable. Looking at it that way, the examination is a great investment.”

### **Will There be Negative Consequences from Tooth Loss?**

The answer is **yes**.

“When a tooth is lost, the bone that surrounds the tooth deteriorates, or melts away. Missing teeth can compromise your eating habits, speech, and appearance. Missing teeth in the front of your mouth can result in hard to hide defects in the bone that can affect the look of your smile along with your self confidence. Missing teeth in the back of your mouth can lead to the collapse of your bite. This affects the appearance of your face, your ability to eat, and the health of your remaining teeth. Complete tooth loss may result in the collapse of the bone structure supporting the lower third of your face as the jaws deteriorate over time.”

Bone loss is the issue

### **Am I too old for implants? Isn’t it too late?**

Patients who have been brought up with parents who have missing teeth or dentures may ask a similar question. Focus on the future and not the past. “The average life expectancy has significantly increased resulting in people living much longer Doesn’t it make sense to preserve your health and comfort for the coming years to help improve the quality of your life?”

### **Patient Education**

The notion is that if you educate your patients they will make the right decision. It takes more than education, it takes a commitment to action. The only real win-win situation is always to have your patient accept the treatment that has been recommended. **Thank You**

**Watch my website for the next treatment coordinator course, practice management courses and online courses Sandie Baillargeon (905) 336-7624. Visit my website at [www.dentalofficeconsulting.com](http://www.dentalofficeconsulting.com)**

Sandie Baillargeon is a leading authority on how to increase the effectiveness of medical and dental business systems. Ms. Baillargeon is author of two text books, *Dental Office Administration* and *The Canadian Dental Office Administrator*, published by ITP Nelson Canada. Sandie is the owner and operator of Dental Office Consulting Services, which specializes in dental business planning, staff development, consulting and continuing education seminars.

