

Angie Drinic -

Dr. O'Keefe: Today, I welcome Angie Drinic, she's principal of DentCents and she's a trainer. She comes into dental offices, trains team members how to transform the way they do business, and I'm going to ask her a question that's just come to me through the Oasis conversation box and Angie I'm going to place it to you like this. I'm told that it's not uncommon for a receptionist come in on Monday morning and to have up to half a dozen voicemails canceling appointments that week. Have you ever heard that one before?

Angie Drinic: Oh yes. I've heard that many many times. That is something that actually I've heard that some team members actually are quite stressed out and you know what they call the Monday morning blues. They're afraid to turn on that recorder because of how many cancellations will be on there. And it sets a negative tone for the rest of the day when you find a lot of cancellations and you're scrambling to fill in those holes.

Dr. O'Keefe: My criminal mind would say that people would call over the weekend because they don't want to have the telephone answered.

Angie Drinic: That's right.

Dr. O'Keefe: So why does this occur?

Angie Drinic: Well, I usually find that there's three reasons that are the top reasons. Reason number one is that we forget that our patients don't come trained, that they have had some negative experiences in the past, that we have to retrain them, that we have to teach them how to treat us. Reason number two is usually limiting language when we use words like little, small, we, just, and things like that. Reason number three is that we think that it's only the responsibility of the receptionist. We don't realize, and we don't train our team, that it's a team effort.

Dr. O'Keefe: So, what can we do to minimize these no shows or cancellations?

Angie Drinic: Well, for one, we can train our teams by teaching them the proper verbal skills, the proper verbal skills in order to retrain or reframe the thinking of our patients and teaching them how to treat us properly. Training our team, how to stop using limiting language. And when I say the team, I include everybody. I include the doctors, the front desk, the whole office. And, also that we trained everybody how to become a team, how to become a cohesive team so that everybody takes responsibility for the results showing up everyday.

Dr. O'Keefe: I believe you have a PowerPoint presentation you want to walk us through.

Angie Drinic: Yes, if you allow me, I have one ready to go.

Dr. O'Keefe: Let's go have a look at that.

Angie Drinic: One of the things that we do is we train a lot of offices on cancellations, no shows and any other disruptions and what seems to be a thing that helps all the offices is following some basic rules. So, we're gonna go ahead and get started with some basic rules. So, rule number one, our patients don't come trained. We have to reprogram the negative experiences that they've had in the past because whatever offices they'd have gone to, may it be with any health providers, there are certain things that have happened, so when they come to your office, they just bring whatever happened to them in in that past experience. So, we have to retrain them. You have to train them how to treat us. So, it's really, really important. Now, what do we do? How do we retrain them? And this is by linking, linking the communication; a continuous link with the patient and the next team member is essential in the chain of communication. Now, what does that mean? It means that it starts from the time that the patient calls, when the patient calls in, we need to get as much information from the patient as possible and we need to link that information with the next person that's going to be taking care of them; may it be the hygienist, the assistant, the doctor, whoever it is. Now, why is that important? If you think back to the last time you were at the physician's office when you were there, usually what happens is you go in or actually you call, you call to make an appointment. When you call to make an appointment, you tell them what is ailing you. They make the appointment, you come in for the appointment and as soon as you arrive, inevitably the receptionist asks you, so what brings you here today? And then, you give her the reasons of why you are there. Then what happens next? She has you have a seat, fill out the forms. But nurse comes out to get you. When the nurse comes out to get you, she brings you back into the operatory. We sit down, usually she's typing away all the information and the question that comes out of her mouth is, so what brings you in today?

Angie Drinic: So, you give her all your symptoms and everything, all the reasons of why you made this appointment. She usually leaves the office because she went to go get the doctor and then the doctor comes back in when you're sitting there waiting and inevitably what does he say? So, what brings you in here today? So, you have to repeat it again. So, that is something that we're used to. We're used to people not listening. We're used to that. When we don't do proper linking, we think that the person is not listening to us and based on their experience. So, It is very important that we do proper linking between all the providers and the patient; so all the information is passed on from one team member to the next so that they know you are listening and this is part of the retraining.

Angie Drinic: The second one, rule number two, rule number two is using limiting language. Limiting language are words that we use without even knowing that we're doing

this; are the reasons that we cause a lot of the no shows or cancellations and sudden disruptions in our schedule. The doctors usually like to use words and they're not even aware they're doing this: small, little. We have a cavity here, so it's important that we do not use those kinds of words that we don't use the word small because when you're talking to a patient about a cavity, that's all they heard. They didn't hear the part where you said, I'm really concerned, I really want to get this one taken care of as soon as possible. All they heard was small. All they heard was little and when you say the word 'we' looks like we have a cavity up here. Then they cannot take responsibility for the health of their mouth or of what's going on in there because it's a 'we' thing. So, it's important that doctors don't use any limiting language.

Angie Drinic: Now, hygienists, for them, limited language falls into the category of when they say it's just a cleaning today, or you have a bit of an infection up there and your gums or you have a small pocket that's showing up. It's important that we don't use that kind of language because again, if we do not put importance in the treatment, how can the patient put any importance? If we minimize it, they minimize it times 10. And for the front desk, the front desk, their limiting language is do you want? And that happens all the time. When the patient comes out after we've done our proper linking and told every team member what's going on and the patient; so, the patient never has to repeat themselves; usually what happens as the hygienist walks away or the assistant or the doctor, the receptionist then asks the question, do you want to make an appointment? I always recommend: don't ask questions to which they can answer with a no; ask in alternatives. So, what day of the week works best for you? What times of the week work best for you so that you come back for that appointment? It is important that if they feel that that appointment is important then the chances of them cancelling are much, much less.

Angie Drinic: Also, there's another one that patients seem to suffer from what I like to call the financial flu. They call them, they tell you they're not feeling well and really isn't that they're not feeling well or not. That doesn't mean that some patients are truly, sometimes not feeling well, but a lot of times is what I call the financial flu. Meaning that you didn't do all the financial arrangements prior to the patient leaving. You didn't set it in stone. They didn't sign. They didn't leave a deposit. Everything wasn't done so that that doesn't happen, so it doesn't disrupt because of financial issues, because they realized how much money they have to pay on the day that they're there, so therefore it's easier for them to cancel. So, good idea is to get all that out of the way prior to their appointment so that that won't be a pause of them cancelling the appointment at the last minute.

Angie Drinic: The next thing is, the last rule is that as a team effort, I've heard this so many times, is that a lot of times we think that it's just the receptionist's responsibility to make sure that patients show up, but it really isn't. It's everybody's responsibility. It's not using limiting language is making sure that the

appointment is solid, that the patient understands why they are coming back and why it's important that they come back. It is the team's responsibility in making sure that there's no un-left communication, making sure that we tell the patient, for example, let's say that the patient is sitting with the hygienist. I want to make sure that when I book the appointment, if I'm booking it in the back as a hygienist, I want to make sure I tell the patient I'm reserving this time for you. So, what I ask for you is that you please put it in your calendar so that if anything else comes up, you're able to tell them that you're unable to do that because you have a prior appointment with me. So, it's really important that we learn the proper verbal skills and communication so that all the cancellations and no shows stop.

Angie Drinic:

Now, who is at risk? The people that are risk are the restorative patients obviously. There's the hygiene patients and the patients with the financial flu. So, we want to make sure that we take every morning when we're doing our morning meeting, we look at all the patients that are coming in a few days, our restorative patients, what would stop them from coming in and what can we do to prevent it? Have to look at all our hygiene patients. Have they been confirmed? Have they been reminded? Have we spoken to them? Is there any financial issues that would stop them from showing up or that can stand in the way of them coming in? Also, new patients, new patients are very important one, and there's also ways to communicate with them. I always like to recommend that all the doctors call the new patients, call them and welcome them to the practice. Tell them, thank you for choosing us. We're so looking forward to seeing you and that my friends will guarantee that patients will not cancel, so we usually train on all this. If you want any training for your office or any questions with no obligations free for no cost to you, please contact us at info@dent-cents.com, call us or text us at 647-967-3093 or visit our webpage at www.dent-cents.com. Thank you and have a fabulous day.

Dr. O'Keefe:

Angie, thank you very much for those very practical tips about reducing no shows. Would you be prepared to come back at future times if viewers have other questions that relate to nonclinical issues related to managing a practice?

Angie Drinic:

Absolutely. It would be my absolute pleasure.