Practice Management

First impressions count

Good housekeeping reflects a well-run business. The first step to implementing this is to introduce a practice presentation plan for all practice staff to follow. Kathy Adams explains how

I’m always a little on edge when embarking on a trip to the dentist, and inevitably my nerves get the better of me in the patient waiting room. So I look around, trying to distract me, if not from the impending appointment, but from the array of toys spread about the carpet, each one an obstacle waiting eagerly to trip me over as my name gets called.

Posters with torn edges decorate the walls, I notice a couple that are out of date, advertising events that happened months ago and then one catches my eye: ‘Please Tidy Away Toys After Use’. I hope the dentist is a little more organised.

Something to read?

Ah, a magazine pile. I didn’t notice it at first but I’m looking forward to catching up on the gossip. I carefully bread around the toys and grab a wrinkled copy of Hello from the top. Before I know it, I’m staring at pictures of Posh and Becks’ wedding, even though it’s 2008. I ponder over the cost of my last trip to the dentist and it becomes me to find that they have not afforded to tidy the place up and source some fresh magazines.

A quick visit to the toilet before I get called through should, if anything, allow me to escape the clutter of the waiting room, yet as I tumble for the lock in the dimly lit toilet, I’m faced with some smudged scrawl on a wonky sheet of A4. Clinging for dear life to the inside of the toilet door reads a sign: ‘Please Do Not Flush Sanitary Products Away. Use The Bin Provided’. Suddenly I’m trying not to touch anything.

A moment later and back in the waiting room, I’m called through a door that I presume leads to my dentist.

Keeping up appearances

A practice’s interior says an awful lot to its patients about the quality of care they can expect from their dentist, so the environment your patients are greeted with and wait in, is equally as important as a friendly chairside manner.

Dentistry is now more commercial than ever before. Patients are becoming customers, cosmetic dentistry is on the increase and prices are rising, so why is shabby housekeeping still very much the norm across many “practices”. More importantly, what can be done to change this?

Good housekeeping reflects a well-run business. An orderly workplace will impress all who enter it – employees, visitors, customers and even the postman. The first step to implementing good housekeeping is to introduce a “practice presentation plan” for all practice staff to follow.

Choosing your products

There are thousands of products available on the market today to refresh a practice and increase its profile. With the introduction of reception art, banners and posters, comfortable, good-looking furniture, attractive consistent signage and storage to hide staff belongings, for example, you’ll soon have everything you need for a stylish, modern and efficient looking practice.

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Finding some inspiration

A trip to your nearest department store will give you some idea of the level of care that goes into the decor, in order to convey a quality image to paying customers and they almost always have such a plan in place. The “practice presentation plan” can outline the rules to be followed, such as making sure all signage is computer generated and framed – imagine the difference a framed sign would have made when going to the toilet, in the example above.

Good housekeeping in the practice benefits employers, employees and patients alike. It can eliminate clutter, which is a common cause of accidents. If floor space is limited in your patient waiting room, consider a space-saving, wall-mounted activity panel as a great alternative to keep children occupied. Set specific areas for placing notices, ensuring old and worn notices are removed.

About the author

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