2015 OFF TO A GOOD START!
The Dental Dow Jones – 1st Quarter 2015:
For the mature area practices sampled, practice production was up 6.1% and collections were up 6.7% compared to the first quarter of 2014. This is the most growth in these indices since 2004.

Patient flow was up 5.1% with new patients up over 10%. Again, the most significant jump in patient flow we’ve seen in years.

One quarter doesn’t a year make but this is certainly good news. It’s also nice to see that downtime in the Doctors’ schedules is down 11% and in the hygiene schedules down 6.5%.

COLLECTIONS MADE COMFORTABLE SEMINAR:
Presented by Shelly Ryan:
Friday, Nov. 6th 9:00am-1:00pm
Embassy Suites Bloomington

This perennial favorite is a must for you and your team. Dealing with patients, money and insurance is something you have to do every day so why not do it well? And, it takes the whole team!

DEALING WITH PATIENT COMPLAINTS –
AN OPPORTUNITY IN DISGUISE:
(Doctors, please share this with your staff)

We’ve written before about how getting positive online reviews can enhance web presence and is a strong “conversion factor” that turns website visitors into patients. With patients being able to complain online as well, we have a double-edged sword. A negative complaint can be seen by who knows how many people! Dealing with negative online reviews is a whole discussion in itself.

This article focuses on dealing with face-to-face patient complaints. However, if you get a negative online review, you can sometimes call that patient and use this same process. We’ve seen situations where the patient has taken the negative review down once their complaint was satisfied.

Naturally, if complaints are handled wrong, you can lose patients. More importantly, patients that complain are also more likely to be loyal patients and refer others if the complaint is handled well. If someone is dissatisfied they will probably tell others. I have heard over the years many different statistics on this, but you can assume for every complaint you hear there are other people who hear or voice the same complaint. Complaints are sort of your “canary in a coal mine” for patient relations.

Our statistics show that the typical dental practice loses about 12% of its patients per year. Probably about half of those lost are due to something the Doctor or staff did. The other half are due to factors beyond the practice’s control, like the patient moving or insurance changes.

★ ★ ★ NEW SPECIAL SEGMENT ★ ★ ★

2015 and 2016 CDT Codes: Learn which codes get the best reimbursement and when to use them; How to get better reimbursement for ERPTs; And more!

This seminar is almost always a sellout. So CALL TODAY to reserve your space before we do our general mailing to Upper Midwest Dentists.
Remember this six step process:

1. Prepare
2. Listen
3. Build rapport
4. Develop a solution
5. Confirm and close
6. Follow through

1) **Prepare:** Maintain an alert and upright posture. Pen in hand. Be ready to listen with an Adult state of mind.

   1. Child (emotional)
   2. Parent (judgmental and rigid)
   3. Adult (rational and solution-seeking)

   When a complainer calls, they are in an emotional (child) state. They may have rehearsed a speech in their mind. They feel abused, cheated, or uncared for. Therefore, the person hearing the “child” may unconsciously start adopting a parent state. That’s when you’ll hear things like “Our policy is...”; “You should have...”; “You don’t know what you’re talking about...”; “It’s your responsibility to know your insurance, etc.”

   By keeping an adult state of mind, you let the child vent then, eventually, through your own behavior, they will start to come to the adult state.

2) **Listen:** Take notes. Acknowledge that you are hearing: “Tell me more.”; “Then what happened?”; “I see.”; “I understand that could be very distressing.”

3) **Rapport:** Use the patient’s name. State your purpose, “I want to find a solution you are happy with.”; or “I’ll help you get to the bottom of this.”; or “We certainly want to do everything we can to make this right for you.” Restate the person’s complaint. “I’ve taken notes and what I heard you tell me was... Do I have that right?”

4) **Solution:** “Here are a couple of things we may want to consider.”; “Would it help if I found out about _____ for you?”

And, of course, “What would you like to have done so we can resolve this?”

5) **Confirm And Close:** “So here’s what I am going to do.” (find out, fix, or make sure “it doesn’t happen again”). “How does that sound to you?” Make sure that you note any specific actions and timeline and who’s going to do what by when.

6) **Follow Through!** Make very sure you follow up on your promises.

   Example: “Your fees are too high!”

A typical response (usually proposed by consultants and dental journal writers) is, “Mrs. Jones, we only use the finest materials and for the quality of care we deliver, blah blah blah.” Or, “Dentistry is inexpensive when you compare it to medical or buying suits or some other things (that are implied to be less important, thus indirectly putting the patient down.)

Instead: “Gosh, I can tell you are unhappy with this. Can you tell me more?”

“Well, Bill, it’s my job to help ensure that you are happy with our services. You obviously feel our fees are high and I’d like your suggestions on how we can go about looking at this.”

The patient might feel the fees are high because they can’t afford things in which case, of course, you work with financial arrangements. They might feel they are higher compared to other offices in which case you might say, “Would you like us to check our fees against other offices or show you what information we have about that?” Or, in many cases, the patient just may want to be acknowledged and they don’t really want you to do anything except understand them. If the fees are indeed high even compared to other offices, then you can explain why. “Our fees are a little higher than average and I wanted to explain to you why they are if that’s what you’d like me to do.” Then (and only then) you could go into things about the quality of
the lab, the time the Doctor spends, the Continuing Ed or technology, and so on.

In Conclusion: No one likes to hear complaints, but dealing with them tactfully is a critical “customer service” skill.

DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS: What is it and what good is it? (E.G., LIGHTHOUSE, REVENUEWELL, DEMANDFORCE, SOLUTION REACH, ETC.)

Use of this technology in Dental offices has almost doubled in the last three years. 38% of area dentists now have it.

1) If you haven’t got it, you’re probably looking into it and it is worthwhile to look into.

2) If you have it, chances are you’re not using it to its full capabilities. That’s worth looking into.

Contrary to what the sales representative will tell you, Digital Communication is not an all-purpose cure to cancellations and failures. It can help keep a practice busier but we cannot prove yet that it reduces no-shows. We do know, however, that it frees up front desk time and we also know that clients have benefitted from its many applications:

1) Patients really like text and email confirmations—it’s part of showing people you are keeping up with technology.

2) This gives your front desk team more time to make appointments because they spend less time confirming them.

3) It gives you the capability of getting surveys from patients, which is good feedback but, as importantly, can help you get more testimonials for your website online reviews.

   We know that testimonials are important conversion factors for converting website visitors into patients. Think of your own behavior when you shop for hotels and how you look at reviews.

4) Promote services such as Invisalign:
Example: a client of ours from Rochester used an email and text announcement to promote their “Invisalign Day”. They feel that this was responsible for 15 patient Invisalign starts.

5) Fill last minute openings: Example: a client in Wisconsin emails patients (RevenueWell) when they have last-minute openings in the hygiene schedule. They offer whitening (bite-down trays from Patterson) to the first person to respond and fill the appointment.

   “Last minute openings. Come out and get that checkup you’ve been putting off and you’ll get free professional-strength whitening…”

Another client in Houston, TX uses digital email and texting (Demand Force) to announce last minute openings in their hygiene schedule. Their incentive is free movie tickets. They said some patients actually wait to schedule when they know they can get free movie tickets. Not all bad because it means that there are a lot of patients eagerly standing by to fill last-minute openings.

You should not overdo it, but if you even do this once or twice a month to fill 2-8 hygiene slots as a result, it is a pretty good payoff.

There are many applications for digital communications and they’re growing! Kelly Larson stays on top of the constant changes and keeps a summary grid of the various digital communication companies to help you compare their offerings. Generally, they charge about $300/mo. Most arrangements are month-to-month (companies are no longer asking for one or two year contracts).

Happy Summer! 
Let’s make 2015 your best year ever!