MINIMIZING PATIENT NO-SHOWS

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THE COST OF PATIENT NO-SHOWS

- No-shows and same day cancellations have a **big bottom line impact**:
  - Both leave you no time to fill a last-minute open appointment slot.
  - Most of your expenses are fixed and do not vary whether you see one patient or 30 patients in a day.
  - A missed appointment means your fixed costs (staffing, rent, etc.) are spread across fewer visits, thereby increasing your average cost per service.
  - If you get $100/visit on average and have two no-shows/day, your bottom line could decrease by $50,000 every year.
CHARGING FOR NO-SHOWS

• Charging for no-shows has fallen out of favor.
  – As a deterrent, many practices have found no-show charges to be ineffective.
  – The cost to bill and collect nominal no-show fees often outweighs the revenues you receive.
  – Many patients refuse to pay and/or leave your practice.
  – No-show charges anger patients more than most things in life. Is $25 worth getting nailed on social media by an angry patient?
  – Charging for no-shows is particularly ineffective for physicians who run late and make patients wait for them consistently.
CONSIDER OVERBOOKING

• If no-shows/same-day cancellations encompass 10 percent or more of your appointment schedule, consider overbooking (double booking) by a similar percentage.
  – Study your schedule; some days/times of the week may be more prone to no-shows, so tailor your overbooking effectively.
  – Alternate new and established patient visits, with most of your double-booking being on the established patient front.
• Make sure your staff understands the math and don’t celebrate these schedule holes — empty appointment slots equal less money for raises and benefits.
• There will be days when every patient shows up. That’s okay.
FREQUENT FLYER NO-SHOWS

- Some patients have a history of missing appointments. They only show when they really need you or need a refill.

- Option A: Lay down the law. Patients who no-show are taking away time from physicians and other patients. If the bad habit continues, go to Option B or C.

- Option B: Discharge such patients. Three “unexcused” absences over two years is where I like to draw the line.

- Option C: Collect a down payment. A $50 non-refundable deposit works wonders for patients who frequently miss office visits.
THE NEW PATIENT CREED

• We’ll do our very best to see you when you need to be seen.
• We’ll do our best to run on schedule.
  – Understand that sometimes visits may take longer than expected.
• We’ll respect you and your time.
• What we expect in return is the following:
  – Follow the plan you and I establish for your care, including keeping your appointments.
  – If you cannot keep an appointment, let us know so that another patient may have that appointment.
APPOINTMENT CONFIRMATION OPTIONS

• Change the office mindset from one of patient *reminders* to one of appointment *confirmations*.
  – The latter affirms patients have a responsibility to show up for their appointments; the former is merely a suggestion.

• Confirmation should occur a **minimum of two (2) days in advance**
  – Anything less doesn’t give you time to fill the appointment slot.

• Have an after-hour option for patients to leave a message to reschedule.
  – You’ll know those slots are now available when patients call first thing in the morning wanting an appointment.
AUTOMATED APPOINTMENT CONFIRMATION

• Automated appointment confirmation is more cost effective and better at reducing no-shows than phone reminders.

• Today’s technology interfaces with your practice management system and allows for telephone, e-mail, and text message appointment confirmation.
  – At the time of check-in/registration, ask each patient how they prefer to get appointment confirmations.
  – This customization of appointment confirmation delivery improves patient compliance and reduces no-shows.
A CAUTIONARY NOTE

- Patients are quick to dispel an automated confirmation call and often do not listen to the entire message.
- “Yeah, yeah, I know I have an appointment on Thursday.”
  - I learned the hard way to use the **arrival time**, rather than the appointment time, in our automated messages.
  - Mrs. Brown, we’re calling to confirm that you will arrive at 9:40 a.m. for your appointment with Dr. Jones on (date) at (location). Please bring your insurance card and ID.