

VIEW FROM THE PRACTICE

ETHICAL CASE PRESENTATION

Clinical editor Rahul Doshi follows up last month's column on ethical case presentation with some hints for incorporating this concept into your business

Last month I wrote about ethical case presentation and discussed some reasons why it's important to offer patients solutions to their problems, rather than just treatment. Here is my step-by-step guide to ethical case presentation, with ideas which are easily incorporated into case presentation and which will enable a dentist to see their patient as a human being, not just a mouth, and offer suitable treatment.

STAGE 1: SEGMENTAL MARKETING

Effective marketing usually involves targeting a type of patient most suited to your dental services. You then promote your services in a way that attracts that type of patient to you. It requires you to segment the market. This method is much easier than trying to appeal to everyone.

STAGE 2: CREATING VALUE

When presenting treatment solutions people must believe that they are receiving value for money. It is no different in dentistry as it is in any other industry. Therefore, in order to help your patients accept your advice and treatment recommendations you need to be building value right from the start.

Value can be given in numerous ways: high end customer service; exceeding patient satisfaction; providing dentistry in an environment of relaxation; or even time spent understanding and actively listening to the patient.

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STAGE 3: AGENDA DISCOVERY

This is a very important stage of ethical case presentation; without this you will not succeed at the objectives: the provision of the optimum solution to your patient's concerns.

Agenda discovery is like answering an exam question; you get no marks for not answering the question asked. Even though your answer may be superb and very knowledgeable, not addressing the patient's question or concern will not get you any marks.

However, ethical case presentation is also about asking questions as much as it is answering them. Asking the right type of questions will take you and your patient on a journey of discovery. The journey will end with your patient feeling that you are very thorough in your attempt to understand them and ultimately you will be able to present treatment to match their specific needs exactly. Of course this agenda discovery will take time, but it is this time which will bring about returns for you later. Also time can be a cheap resource to use up, especially if it can provide substantial gains later.

This discovery process is one every practice needs to incorporate to some level. I feel this is very important when building long term relationships, just as much as the biological assessment.

I recommend that you perform the clinical examination using a considerable amount of conversation. You need to be seeing something and informing the patient of your discovery and talking about it. You are making the patient aware of how thorough you are at diagnosis and how much you know. All this conversation needs to be in simple language.

STAGE 4: THE SOLUTION PROCESS

It is really important you make the assessment appointment as interactive as possible. This



is the key to ethical case presentation. You cannot provide a solution to something which the patient does not perceive as a problem. Also remember, you need to keep the patient's agenda in mind at every stage so that you can keep repeating that you understand what it is. It is very satisfying from the patient's point of view to be reassured in this way.

After having built up the value, discovered your patient's agenda and understood their mouth, you present your advice and solutions to your patient's problems. Because you have undergone a full assessment and discovery process of your patient's agenda you will increase your case acceptance success rate.

Economic fluctuations create uncertainty in business. As business owners we need to combat these challenges with sound processes that allow us to enhance the standards of care that we provide. Creating a process in Ethical Case Presentation becomes essential and necessary in uncertain financial climates.

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