

VIEW FROM THE PRACTICE

WHY PATIENTS DECLINE TREATMENT

This month, Rahul Doshi looks at various reasons why patients do not want to proceed with dental advice

In turbulent times when things are that much harder we have to be more scrupulous on every aspect of running our premium practice. One area of great concern is the reasons why patients should not accept our advice and recommendations. Inevitably, this would be to the detriment of both the patient's oral health and to our practice. Therefore, we need to establish the true causes of patients declining treatment if we are to remedy this situation.

If we were to analyse the reasons behind why some patients do not accept our treatment advice, the answers would be quite interesting. Despite all our efforts, sometimes patients just don't go ahead with the solutions that we present to them. Why?

REJECTING TREATMENT

Looking closer at this situation the most reasonable explanations would be:

1. Money. Many people assume that patients fail to get treatment due to the treatment expense or lack of money. This is also what you will quite commonly hear your patients say. But keep in mind that the real objection is often hidden behind what patients tell you. Although it is true that patients will sometimes reject or delay treatment due to money issues, this objection is actually rarer than you might first think.

2. Lack of time. Commonly cited by patients as a reason to put off treatment, this objection is often held in high esteem by dentists

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and staff alike. However, it is rarely a real objection. If people really want something they will often find a way of getting it. Time is an entity that they can manage as they like, and if patients truly feel the need for treatment, time will be of no consequence.

3. Lack of understanding. Another theory is that patients avoid treatment because they don't understand the procedure or why it is necessary. Of course, like the money issue, this can sometimes be true, but in today's information environment (and Google), this is often an excuse. Also, most dental practices provide good advice and explanations.

4. Fear of dentistry. Occasionally you do get the real phobic. However, in most circumstances a little care and attention can go a long way. Despite this being an obstacle with patients who have had bad previous experiences, you can overcome this easily.

REASONING

The reasoning behind a decision as to whether or not a person should go ahead with treatment advice is a very important aspect of case presentation to understand. If you were to address something that may not even be an issue, ultimately it will become an issue the patient considers. In other words, by addressing the wrong objection, you can actually help your patient discover new reasons not to receive treatment.

Sometimes, there is real reasoning behind a patient's refusal, but more often than not the answer is simply an excuse to mask a deeper explanation – one that they do not want to admit or discuss without a prompt.

So if these are not the true objections to going ahead, what are the real reasons?

Surprisingly, the thing about most important real objections in dentistry is that most of



the time you overcome them without even knowing it. The reason why most people ever say yes to your advice is the same reasons why they would continue to do so even if the treatment plan or fee is premium.

As a business the importance of this consideration is paramount. Only after understanding what makes people want to accept your recommendations and finally go ahead with treatment will you be able to succeed in a dental business. Next month, I will be looking into the real reasons why people don't go ahead with treatment and show you how to overcome them.

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