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By completely revamping his practice's approach to financing procedures, an Arkansas-based doctor tripled his practice's earnings in less than two years and dramatically increased case acceptance.

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Many dental practices remain skeptical about the true benefits of a Web site. For one practice in Boulder, Colo., however, the Web site is a vital, dynamic part of the practice's marketing mix.

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Whether you need information, are looking for some fresh ideas, or just want to talk, you'll have the opportunity to make a personal connection with one of our territory managers.

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Dental Fee Plan™

Common Bond

Sharing Ideas for Practice Growth

Keep it simple and real: Get patients to just say "yes"

Increase case acceptance by offering payment options

Is there a way to increase case acceptance? According to well-known dental consultants Dr. Patrick Wahl and Lorraine Hollett, one of the most important factors in getting a patient to agree to treatment is offering a variety of payment options.

Q ■ Do most practices view increasing case acceptance as an important issue?

Patrick Wahl: Many dentists and staff members are aware it's an issue, but there are some practices that think, "Well, we don't really offer many payment options; we just present the treatment and if the patients want it, they'll do it." Part of that thinking is valid, but the fact is that many patients need the treatment to be made affordable — not in terms of the overall fee, but the ability to pay it out.

Q ■ Do you have a recommended rate of case acceptance?

Lorraine Hollett: I think you should evaluate it one patient at a time. Look at each case and say, "Did we do everything we could as far as edu-

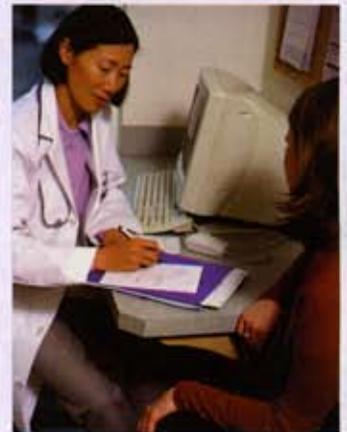
cating the patient and recommending proper treatment? Did the team back it up with every financial option, so that if the patient chose not to proceed it was only because the person didn't value it, not because he or she couldn't afford it?"

Q ■ What's one of the first ways to boost case acceptance?

Patrick: Help the patient while that person is still in the office. Some of the practices we work with may give the patient the number of a company like Dental Fee Plan, but that's not enough.

Lorraine: When they're in the office, they're thinking about dentistry. The minute they walk out that door, life hits them in the face. Too many offices we visit let prospective patients walk out without trying to make it happen right then. They need to go that extra mile. We can't stress this enough! Take the time to say, "Let me try to help make this happen for you."

Q ■ Some practices may feel that's too much pressure. What do you say to that?



Patrick: It can be done in a way that's very service oriented. It's not about being confrontational. You're merely offering to get the ball rolling for the patient, either by calling or faxing Dental Fee Plan. If you help them, most patients will go ahead with the treatment, when they otherwise would just leave your office with a phone number. You're trying to ensure that the patient gets the treatment you've recommended.

Lorraine: Any of us can get intimidated, especially when it comes to money matters. When they walk out of there with just a phone number, they're thinking, "Who am I calling? What should I say?"

Q ■ Are there certain things that you would recommend to increase case acceptance?

Patrick: It's one thing to be signed up with a company

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Keep it simple and real: Get patients to just say "yes"

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like Dental Fee Plan, but you have to use it — and do so in the proper order. A lot of the practices we work with may offer a plan like DFP, but they don't offer it until every other payment option has been exhausted. Or they only offer it to patients who they feel certain are not going to pay. They don't offer it to their "better patients," when in fact every patient can benefit from using a payment plan. Our advice is don't assume and don't pre-judge!

Lorraine: You want them to understand that you offer the same payment options to every patient, that you treat everyone the same and that you let patients choose what's best for them. Have it in writing, so your entire team knows what's offered. Then it comes down to the scripting — how you present it. The patient is sitting there, like a sponge, waiting for this help. Let patients know there are many different and comfortable ways for them to pay. Enthusiastically say something like, "If I could just have a moment of your time, I'd like to help you with the fee for your treatment and the payment options we have available. Let's see what's most convenient for you."

Q Are there things that negatively affect case acceptance?

Patrick: There are words that you can use and words you can avoid. Instead of saying "loan," you can say "payment plan." Instead of

finance company, you can say "They do all our billing for us." Usually people need to hear "It's really simple" or "It's a quick phone call" instead of words that don't sound attractive like "credit check" or "application."

Lorraine: Words are key. Patients will run when they hear words like "There's a credit check involved" or "There's a contract involved." It's so important to present payment in a positive light. That's why I feel scripting is so important.

Q Do you have any other recommendations?

Lorraine: Make sure patients see that anything is possible. Even if a patient says "Oh, I'll never get approved," the staff person should say, "Well, let's try it. You never know." The team member must be positive through the whole process.

Patrick: Sometimes the patient is just saying that.

Lorraine: Exactly. They're hoping maybe that the doctor's office will continue to be the bank and they can get away without paying. So there are lots of reasons that patients say the things they do. That's why we have to stay positive. Dental Fee Plan is a great option, because people want to do business over the phone or the Web if possible. They don't want to deal with a lot of paperwork, and they like the flexibility of the payment options.

"Look at each case and say, 'Did we do everything we could as far as educating the patient and recommending proper treatment?'"

Q Any final recommendations about ways to increase case acceptance?

Lorraine: It comes down to service. I think it's the way you greet the patient and shake her hand. I think it's the way you warmly welcome the person into the practice. Then there's the next level of service: Some practices are offering coffee service, which is great, and they're offering warm towels to their patients after a long appointment. But these are

tools. It's how we offer them to the patient that creates the feeling.

Patrick: If you want to increase case acceptance, you have to offer great payment options. Once a practice properly puts these choices in place for patients, it frees the dentist to more confidently examine and diagnose cases, knowing that patients are more apt to go ahead with treatment because they can afford it.



Dr. Patrick Wahl and Lorraine Hollett are dental consultants who help dental practices become more successful through learning resources, seminars and a variety of consulting services. They often speak at seminars and conventions and frequently write articles for major dental magazines. Training materials from their consultancy, called Office Magic, show how to eliminate billing, increase case acceptance, and commit to five-star service. For more information, call them at 800-750-8779 or visit their Web site at www.officemagic.com.