

Perception ... What Are Your Patients REALLY Hearing?

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**Perception ... What Are Your Patients REALLY Hearing?**

**By Livvie Matthews**

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Never underestimate the power of perception! Perception plays a major part in what is actually said –vs– how it is heard. And to patients...perception is reality!

For example, lets look at broken appointments, one of the biggest problems in your practice. Last minute changes and no show appointments account for thousands of dollars a month in lost revenue for the practice!

Are you sending signals to your patients that it's all right to break appointments?

When the patient calls and says they "Forgot" or "Have a meeting." or "Just want to reschedule." Is your response "That's OK.", "Sure, that's no problem." or simply..."How soon do you want to come back?" And then schedule them right back at the 1st available opening?

A well established practice with a scheduling coordinator who knows the patients well has a sense of "offending" the patient if they remind them of the dilemma this last minute change will make.

Nothing could be further from the truth or more harmful to the practice!

An unusually high number of broken appointments generally translates into a lack of respect concerning your practice and appointments time and "time is money."

Generally patients simply are not aware of the problems associated with last minute changes because they have been "trained" (they hear) it's so easy to change the appointment.

Often before we can "train" the patient, the front office must first "re-train" their response to these last minute calls.

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For example, when the specific date or time a new patient or existing patient wants is not available, if our reply is: "We get cancellations every day" or even worse, "We get cancellations all the time and can get you right in", what have we taught this patient?

In just a matter of seconds the patient has been "taught" (heard) It's all right to call at the last minute to change an appointment, cancellations happen all the time, when they do cancel they can get "right back in."

The patient has no value associated with the practice or the appointment time. In fact, we "signaled" (and they heard) it's OK!

A more positive verbal response would be: "Let's go ahead and schedule you an appointment. Should there be a change in our schedule on that date, I will be glad to call you. May I have a number that you can be reached during the day?"

This time in just a matter of seconds you have trained the new patient and existing patient to think (they heard): You have a tight schedule (busy practice), "Cancellations" are not even mentioned (not an option) and there could be a wait before being re-appointed if they have to change——(best keep the appointment!)

Value is now being associated with the practice and appointment time.

This problem didn't happen overnight and won't be "fixed" overnight. But making it a priority to use positive verbal skills in training your patients to value their appointment and practice time will make a noticeable difference.

After all, how you are perceived by your patients is everything, and it's all in their Perception.... What your patients are (Really) hearing!

Livvie Matthews, Business Office and Patient Relationship Specialist helps you FOCUS on narrowing the gap between your practice -- your business. Visit

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News

### **Music Hath Charms ...**

#### **By News Canada**

(NC)—Sandra Trehub at the University of Toronto studies how people develop hearing and speech perception from infancy to adulthood. She has developed ways to measure hearing and speech perception in both quiet and noisy surroundings. This work leads her to believe that background noise interferes with children's abilities to understand natural speech. Trehub is comparing monolingual and

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bilingual kids under similar circumstances. She is also studying perception of musical and speech patterns by children with cochlear implants and by children with a genetic disorder that is associated with unusual talent in language and music. Trehub's work in this area may have far-reaching effects on issues related to hearing, learning and musical abilities in both children and adults.

Dr. Trehub's research is being funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR). CIHR is Canada's preeminent health research catalyst and is funded by the government of Canada. An exciting new concept, CIHR is modernizing and transforming the health research enterprise in Canada.

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