



Evaluating patient perceptions

Enlist the help of your staff

By Dr. Van B. Haywood

Most dentists and their staff members enter the office from the rear, and may not be aware of what patients see when entering the front door. The dentist may want to schedule a staff meeting that focuses on determining their patients' perceptions when they enter the office as a new patient.

In preparation for the meeting, ask each staff person, armed with a notepad, to evaluate the following 12 steps at the beginning of the day without conferring with one another. At the staff meeting, the entire team should discuss their notes and observations

to determine the perceptions they think patients might be getting when they enter the office for the first time.

1 Drive up and down the street where the office is located. How does the building look from the street? Do you see unsightly items like trash cans, equipment, litter or unsightly views of the building?

2 Can the office be identified easily from the street and when walking up to the building? Is the parking area obvious? Is the main entrance visible?

3 Park where patients park. Is the entrance to the building easy to find?

Is signage reasonable and clear? Is the handicapped sign visible?

4 Walk to the front door. Is there trash in the landscaping? Is it easy to open door? Is the office sign readable just beside the door?

5 When you enter, is it obvious where to go? Are there any distracting or messy areas?

6 Sit in each chair in the reception room without talking for 1 minute. Look all around and make notes. See what the patient sees on the ceiling, behind the chairs, on the book table, etc.

7 After a minute, rotate chairs until

all team members have had a chance to sit in each chair but have no conversations.

8 Evaluate the resources in the reception room. Is there dental literature that promotes the services you offer? Is there some reading material that is current? Are there some games or items for children? Are there health magazines? Are your hobbies showcased?

9 Approach the check-in window. Is it obvious where to check in? When you look past the window behind the receptionist, is there anything

See *PERCEPTIONS*, back page



PERCEPTIONS *Continued from front page*

in the background that is either messy or not Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) compliant?

10 Walk back to the operatory the way the patient would to both the treatment rooms and the hygiene room. What do you see? Are there compromised areas that need to be hidden?

11 If the patient has to use the restroom, is there a sign on the door? What in the bathroom should be cleaned and checked regularly? Whose job is that?

12 Take turns sitting in each dental chair fully reclined. Is there anything on the walls or on the ceiling that should be cleaned? Should you put posters on the ceiling? Are there dirty areas under the counters?

Once you have been to each area the patient would go or see, the dental team should convene and compare notes. Now you have identified the changes needed to convey to your patients the quality of dental care they will receive on first impression. ➤



Dr. Haywood is professor in the Department of Restorative Sciences, Dental College of Georgia at Augusta University, Augusta, Georgia. While

he is known for introducing tray bleaching to the world in 1989, he directs an occlusion course, and has lectured on clinical and practice management issues in over 30 countries and 30 states.

Dr. Haywood's article, "Evaluating patient perceptions," reprinted here with permission, appeared in the Spring 2017 issue of Dental Practice Success.

Dental Practice Success is a quarterly digital publication that ADA Publishing produces in cooperation with the ADA Center for Professional Success. DPS brings together well-known dental practice management experts who serve up the best advice on a wide range of topics for your practice and work-life balance.

Read the current issue at ADA.org/dps or visit the ADA Center for Professional Success website, Success.ADA.org/dps, for more practice tips.

Haywood V. Evaluating patient perceptions. Dental Practice Success Spring 2017. Volume 4 No. 1. Copyright © 2017 American Dental Association. Reproduced with permission.

Editorial and Advertising Policies

Any statements of opinion or fact are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the American Dental Association. Neither the ADA nor any of its subsidiaries have any financial interest in any products mentioned in this publication. Any reference to a product or service, whether in advertisements or otherwise, is not intended as an endorsement or as approval by the ADA or any of its affiliated organizations unless accompanied by an authorized statement that such approval or endorsement has been granted.

All matters pertaining to advertising should be addressed to the advertising sales manager, Sales and Marketing Department, American Dental Association, Publishing Division, 211 E. Chicago Ave., Chicago, IL 60611, 1-312-440-2740, fax 1-312-440-2550. All advertising appearing in ADA publications must comply with official published standards of the American Dental Association, a copy of which is available on request.