



How to make the Best Treatment Affordable

Freedom to perform the type of dentistry you prefer is high on the list of desires of many dentists. As patient awareness and desire to look better and to keep their teeth for a lifetime and with many dental services being discretionary, it seems it should be easy for dentists to have long term, high quality dentistry accepted. So why isn't there more case acceptance in your practice?

Cosmetic dentistry is an optional service. Patients choose to have this done. It doesn't fill a basic need in their lives. Cosmetic dentistry fills a desire. It can help them look good, feel good, and aid to help them keep their teeth for a lifetime.

As a dentist, you have the technical skills to fill this desire for your patient, but do you have the skills and resources to assist and inform them in the decision-making process of their purchase decisions?

High quality, discretionary dentistry is not inexpensive. For a patient to accept treatment, they must go through the same process they would if they were purchasing another item of similar value. We must think of dentistry as an optional purchase, and see the purchase process in comparison to other products or services that may be competing for the same discretionary dollar.

The fact is that the money your patients spend on long lasting, beautiful dentistry is the money that could be spent on other desires to fulfill their feelings of health, fitness, youth and personal rewards. They could buy a new car, go on a cruise, have facial surgery or buy some in-home health equipment, etc. We must learn to present optional dentistry with these choices in mind. The benefits to mastering the skills of presentation are many. As well as having greater case acceptance, the practice successful in marketing ideal, long-term dentistry will:

- Have greater enthusiasm for dentistry and its choices.
- Have a more structured schedule with longer appointments and fewer cancellations as patients are active in their choice of treatment
- Provide excellent treatment
- Have fewer emergencies as patients choose more permanent dentistry.

The Money Question

The one step in case presentation where dentist and staff feel most uncomfortable is talking about money. How does your practice complete the process from a patient wanting to begin treatment, to talking about their investment towards these procedures?

To make the patient comfortable and trust in your practice, you must have an efficient and effective system for financial arrangements.

To provide your patients with the absolute best service, you should have various options for payment available to them. Just as when you make a large purchase from a department store, you are given the options of cash, check, credit card, and often times 90 days same as cash-you too should have many options in place and available to help your patients with payment.



Establish Payment Options

You will find that you must have various parameters for payment:

- Cash or check (with a discount if paid 48 hours prior to the 1st appointment)
- Credit Cards-Visa, MasterCard, Discover, AMEX, etc.
- Monthly payments available through an outside funding source, not financed by the Doctor and staff

By using the above parameters, you will provide your patients with viable ways for them to afford the best treatment.

The key to stress-free payments in your office is to let the professionals handle the financing. There are many reputable services available to you which provide affordable financing for your patients, and at no-recourse (if the patient defaults on the loan the doctor will not get the account back from the outside funding source) to you. Dentists were never meant to be in the lending business. Let the lenders handle the financing, while you concentrate on what you do best-dentistry.

Most offices offer payment via credit card. If you don't, arrange for your office to accept several major credit cards. People are very used to paying for things with a credit card. The patient will be given the grace period for payment that the card offers, while the credit company pays you directly.

Provide an outside funding source.

There are many companies who deal specifically with dentists to provide funding for their patients. They have proven to be very easy to use for the patient and the practice.

The first step for you is to contact several funding sources and compare what they offer you and your patients. One thing you should look for from each finance company is they must offer no recourse to you.

Things you should consider when comparing companies are:

- Do they offer your patients same as cash options? (6 or 12 months, 0% interest)
- What are the discounts at the various rates to you? (What does it cost you? Normally this ranges from 5 to 10%)
- Is there a fee to set-up for you?
- What is the speed of the transactions? (How fast will you know if patients are accepted? How soon will you receive the funds and by what method?)
- What is the maximum amount of financing they can offer?
- Are their APR rates competitive with bank cards?
- Are they easy to work with?



Finding a Source

To find an outside funding source, start by looking in your Yellow Pages under financing. Many of our clients have found their local branch of NorWest and American General Finance to be very helpful.

Get information from other well-known dental financing companies including:

Dental Fee Plan 1-888-337-4171

Healthcare Creditline 1-800-334-6749

Once you compare the options of the various companies, set up funding through at least 2 sources.

You will also see that having a well-defined system of managing financing reduces broken appointments, and takes the risk and fear of payment away from you and your staff, creating a calmer, more comfortable relationship between you and your patients

The biggest reason financial options are not well implemented in every practice in the US is lack of specific training for staff doing the financial arrangements, the patient is not shown the benefit to them (smaller monthly payments over a period of time can really help many people) and the presenter not understanding how these programs greatly benefit the patient. Financial arrangements, like a good meal, need to have an appetizing presentation. An enthusiastic, attractive presentation highlighting the patient benefits will go miles towards a satisfying experience for the patient.