

Growth Strategies: Three Easy Ways to Help Minimize Failed Appointments

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Last-minute cancellations are not only frustrating, they may be lost opportunities to get patients healthy and increase practice production. Here are my top three ways to minimize failed appointments.

1 **Never "Confirm" Appointments.**

Whether you're using text, email or voice, the purpose of the communication has to be very patient friendly so:

It's important how you "confirm" appointments with patients. No matter how you connect, the communication has to be very patient friendly so:

When calling or communicating, the strategy is to never suggest that the patient has the opportunity to cancel. Instead, remind them they have a "reservation" with the doctor and address any potential cost concerns (a key reason people cancel).

DO: Say, "Hi this is Lois at Dr. Smith's office. We're calling to let you know you have reserved time with the doctor on Tuesday, June 15th at 8 o'clock. We're looking forward to seeing you then. Remember, we accept the CareCredit credit card for out-of-pocket cost."

DON'T: Use words like "remind" or "call us back to confirm".

If the patient is "high-risk" with a history of cancelling on short notice the strategy is to pique their curiosity and compel them to call back so you can talk through any barrier they may have to keeping their appointment, helping prevent a last minute hole in the schedule and lost production time.

DO: Leave message that is a bit more ambiguous that merely says, "Please call me back regarding your appointment."

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2

Don't Preschedule Everyone

Patients have different life events they cannot control so get to know your patients and:

DO: Only schedule patients who are predictably reliable if you are scheduling more than one month out. These are patients with a solid history of showing up.

DON'T: Schedule patients who, like me, are unreliable. I travel a lot and my schedule seems to change daily.

DO: If patients have a history of cancelling or have shared with you a "hectic" schedule, when it's time for them to return to the practice, call with a "last minute change in the schedule" that is within a two week window.

3

Mondays are Off Limits

New patients have yet to establish a relationship with you and are not emotionally or financially connected to the practice. And the worst day for last-minute cancellations is Monday because you have no time to fill the open appointment if you receive a cancellation voice mail or email from a patient over the weekend.

DO: Schedule new patients on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays.

DON'T: Schedule new patients on a Monday when you have no time to call and fill the hole if they no-show.

DO: Let new (and actually all) patients know their payment options before their appointment – especially if you accept the CareCredit credit card. Many, many patients already have it and may appreciate being able to use it at your practice. And if they don't have CareCredit but have cost concerns that may cause them to fail their appointment, you can help put their mind at ease.

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