

Office Pet Peeves

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During my more than 25 years in chiropractic, I have experienced firsthand how doctors can be better leaders and help their CAs. Since I was a CA for many years, a few of these pet peeves have become my very own. Traveling around the country and critiquing practices, I am sure that CAs and doctors will relate without a doubt, to some or all of these pet peeves - especially because doctors are notorious for implementing policies and procedures that they do not adhere to themselves.

1. Personal phone calls. Isn't it a pretty standard office policy that no personal phone calls are allowed unless it is an emergency? Does your doctor sit in their office and talk on the phone (or play on the computer) while patients might be waiting? Is your doctor late coming back from lunch, meetings or the gym? CAs must make up excuses, face patients that are waiting and constantly are put in awkward situations. Patients' time is valuable and they should be treated with respect. Simply stated, phone calls should be made when there are no patients. It is quite important for our doctors to set an example.
2. Doctors who do not make the time to adjust their staff. CAs should be treated as patients when they begin employment at any given practice. It educates them and, in turn, allows them to help teach patients about chiropractic and the importance of their care. Doctors always seem to be in a rush to go to lunch or to go home at the end of the day. CAs should not have to continually beg to get an adjustment. Setting an example to patients is important and CAs and staff should be adjusted regularly so they are consistently working at living at their peak performance.
3. Doctors who change office policies without telling staff. Most practices have policies and procedures written down and kept in a manual. At times, CAs face situations where the doctor has agreed to change a policy but neglects to tell the CA. An example may be that the doctor tells a patient that the fee for their treatment is \$50. By the time the doctor walks the patient to the front desk, they tell the CA (after hemming and hawing from the patient) that the fee is only \$35. Another example: A patient has not been in for a year and protocol calls for an exam and a new set of films. The CA has spent 20 minutes explaining reasons for this policy to the patient while on the phone, setting the appointment. The patient shows up for the visit and the doctor just adjusts the patient without sticking to protocol.
4. Doctors who are always late. Many doctors arrive late in the morning, starting the day off on a bad note. Those same doctors usually are late getting back from lunch. Patients sit in the reception area, stare at the CAs and/or come up to the front desk demanding to know why the doctor is running late - and oftentimes very loudly. It makes CAs feel quite uncomfortable and there really is no good way to tell a patient that the doctor is not even at the office yet. If this only happens once in a blue moon, patients will understand. It is unacceptable if it happens frequently, as it is rude and it insinuates to patients that their time is not valuable.
5. Doctors who do not take their CAs suggestions into consideration. Many CAs listen to patient complaints all day long. No one likes to hear negativity and complaining all of the time. This creates tension, stress and a negative environment in any practice. Oftentimes, doctors do not address problems, or worse, ignore suggestions made by CAs because they just don't want to deal with them. Many CAs have learned through experience how to handle situations (through trial and error) and have become quite talented at resolving situations that arise without the help of the doctor. When CAs make suggestions, doctors need to be more open-

minded and have faith that the people they have chosen to be part of their team have good feedback and common sense. Doctors need to be willing to listen to their CAs and make changes.

Every practice should do its best to work as a team. Be respectful of each other, establish good working rapport and develop positive attitudes. Teamwork takes work and one has to give respect to get it. If doctors and their staff want to have a practice that runs effectively and efficiently, then they must listen to each other and learn that communication is not only a necessity - it is *key!*

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