

Reactivation: Lack of a Plan, Avoidance or Emergency?

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There are many reasons patients stop coming in and decide to discontinue care. Almost all chiropractors have a long list of patients who should and could be reactivated, yet few have taken the time to develop a formal protocol. Consider your own reactivation/recall system. Does it work? Reactivating only a small percentage could represent a significant increase in practice volume. By developing a reactivation program, you have nothing to lose.

There are, in fact, numerous reasons patients discontinue care. However, by recalling those patients, you are able to let them know about additional services your practice might now provide and how important it is to maintain relationships. After all, it's all about patient care! Many offices have chosen not to implement a reactivation program to correct a slump in practice for fear of rejection, lack of an organized recall system or because of an emergency. Does any of this sound familiar?

Start off with a simple letter that can be mailed to patients who have been "missing" for three to 12 months. I have designed a letter that has worked for many offices and can be modified to suit your practice. It suggests numerous reasons why a patient may have decided to stop coming back and may, in fact, make some of your patients think twice!

Dear Patient,

You did not get this letter by accident! I was going through a list of patients who have stopped coming to me over the years and was shocked by some of the names on my list. You were one of them. My first thought was, why would you stop coming in for care? Are you crazy?

Then the truth hit me. It was my fault. That's right, I am to blame. Why? Well, I could only come up with five reasons you would stop coming. However, only one is valid. Here are some of the reasons I came up with:

1. I don't feel any better, so why continue with care if it isn't working?

This is a legitimate concern. After all, you came to see me to solve a problem. If this is the situation and you did not improve, you might think I failed you. You also might have an injury or problem that takes a longer time to heal. After all, when you go to the dentist with a rotten tooth, they don't give you a new tooth; they fix it up the best they can so it does not get any worse. Sometimes we are faced with the same situations.

2. I feel better, so I don't need to go anymore.

This might be the worst reason to stop coming! If you are feeling better, it

is obviously working. Do you stop going to the dentist because your teeth stop hurting? No. You go to make sure you never have any problems with your teeth and gums. You go because you want to maintain healthy teeth. The same holds true for exercise and diet. If you stop going to the gym or eat junk for all of your meals, you will gain weight and become out of shape.

3. I can't afford it.

If money is your issue, I will make it simple for you to afford it. Here is my analogy: If you came in once a month, it would cost you \$1.31 a day. If you don't spend that on your health, you will spend it on something else. The next time you are at Starbucks, buy a "Tall" instead of a "Grande." Be honest, money is not the reason!

4. I am too busy.

We only think we don't have enough time. We waste a lot of time watching TV, sleeping in and doing nothing special. The next time your back is hurting and you can't move around, you will find the time to come in and see me, and it will cost you more money because you waited too long.

5. Simple: You forgot!

This is probably the real reason you are on my list! It is so easy to get caught up in your busy schedules and forget some important things. The things you forget usually are the most important ones. How often do you do things for other people - your boss, your kids and your family? Do you neglect yourself and important things you need to do?

There are a lot of excuses, but only one good reason to stop coming in for care. A \$1.31 a day has to be worth your health. There really is no amount of money you could spend to maintain good health. I hope you will take this letter seriously and give me a call and start care again, or at least come in and get checked out. Those people will live a healthier, happier life. They will be thankful they picked up the phone and made the call. Well, what about you?

Many bad decisions in our lives cannot be changed. This one can! Change this decision and call to set up an appointment to come in and see me. I promise it will be worth it.

Yours in good health...

Follow-up calls are essential and must be made by one of the team's most assertive CAs. A CA who has already built rapport with some of those past patients and has little fear of rejection is beneficial. The following is some simple scripting that can be used:

CA: This is (name) calling from (name of practice) to see if you received the letter we sent you recently.

Patient: Yes, I did / No, I did not.

CA: Dr. ____ has set aside some time over the next few weeks to see some former

patients and make sure they are as healthy as possible. The doctor asked me to call you personally to set up a time for you to come in since it has been so long since we last saw you. Can I set up an appointment for you to come in and get checked?

Patient: Yes (appointment made) / No.

CA: (If a patient says no) Fine, but might I ask if there is a specific reason you wouldn't want to make an appointment? Thank you for telling me, and I would like to remind you that we are always here for you!

CAs, take action now by first printing out a list of all patients who have "dropped out," as well as ones who have not been seen for a long time. Reactivating only a small percentage could represent a significant increase in practice volume.

Patients may have many reasons for choosing not to come back into your practice. If patients are educated by the doctor on a consistent basis, have a great first impression of your office and feel as though the doctor and team really care, they will be open to coming back in to get checked. Take the time to put your reactivation program into effect now, and find out if it works for you!

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