

Sowing Seeds to Grow Your Practice, Part 1: The Little Things Matter

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Recently, I was conducting an application meeting and one of the applicants asked the doctor what type of advertising he did. The doctor's response was that he had built his practice without doing any outside advertising. It had been built from the inside out, as is the case in many successful practices.

Educating and building relationships with existing patients is vital, as is having proper systems and procedures in place before the patient has any contact with your office. In previous articles, I have addressed several of these systems and procedures, but in this article I want to focus on some fun things you can do in your office to educate your patients and to show them how much you appreciate them and their faith, confidence and belief in what you do.

Cautionary reminder: [Remember HIPAA guidelines](#) when implementing any systems that may involve exposure of protected patient information. If a patient gives their consent to use their information, be sure they sign a waiver to that effect.

Appreciation and Warm Fuzzies

Arrange for a local florist to deliver a live plant to your office every Monday morning. At your weekly team meeting, determine which patient you would like to give it to that week. It can be given to a patient to celebrate a special event such as a birthday, engagement, wedding, graduation, birth of a child, or because someone just needs a little cheering up. Watch their faces light up with a smile as you hand it to them.

Personalized "thank you" notes should be sent to anyone who refers a patient to your office. Each note should express your appreciation, thank the patient for their confidence in you and assure them that you will do your best to help the new patient. Many states prohibit giving a gift for referrals. Check with your state board to determine what you can give. Welcome notes should be sent to all new patients along with information on how to contact you if they have a chiropractic emergency.

Special-occasion cards should be sent to patients to acknowledge any milestones in their lives. You can purchase cards for just about every occasion for under a dollar apiece at discount stores. Sometimes it will be the only card they receive and it will make their day.

A Picture Is Worth a Thousand Words

One office I went to had framed patient testimonials all around the reception room and in the dressing rooms. Patients were asked to write testimonials about what brought them to the office and how they benefited from chiropractic adjustments. Eye-catching phrases like "Golf Swing Improved," "[No More Migraines](#)" and "Avoided Tubes in the Ears" were placed above the patient's picture and typed testimonial. This was all placed on fun, themed paper, which can be found at many crafts stores. This particular office was located in a strip mall so they had the testimonials

facing the walkway so that people passing by would stop and read them. They did not have any magazines in their office at all.

Binders with patient testimonials are great, too. Consider having the binder divided by symptoms. Most patients are coming to your office for symptoms and find it interesting to read about how your patients with the same or similar symptoms have benefited from chiropractic care.

First Impressions: How Healthy Is Your Reception Area?

Your reception area is the first impression the patient has when they arrive for their visit. Take a few minutes and go sit in your reception room. Ask yourself these questions: Are the plants green and healthy? Is it free from dust and dirt? Is the carpet clean? Is the wall paint fresh and clean? What do you hear: Are the CA and office personnel talking about chiropractic; is the music soothing and free of commercials or negative messages? How does the office smell? Remember, patients with allergies may have issues with air-freshening products. Are the chairs firm and not sagging in the middle? Do they support the patient's spine? What reading materials do you have available? Do they reflect chiropractic philosophy?

If you must have magazines in your reception area, I recommend that they reflect good, healthy lifestyles. If there is a chance that they may contain ads for drugs, the ads should be removed with a sharp blade before the magazines are placed in the reception room. Also throw away the magazines with the covers falling off, or consider placing them in magazine covers like the libraries do.

Bulletin boards or white boards with a monthly topic are fun, too. I remember CA trainer Sherry Hodge showing a picture of an office that had a bulletin board by the front desk that patients saw when they came up to check out. The bulletin board was covered in beautiful bright-yellow flowers and had information about how chiropractic has helped many asthma and allergy sufferers. (If you would like a free list of monthly topics for your board, send your request to lisa_bilodeau@hotmail.com with the word "Boards" in the subject box.)

Brochures are a great tool, but the reality is that they are not read very often when they are placed in the reception area. Sherry Hodge suggests that rather than having them out in your reception area, you should put them in the bathrooms, adjusting rooms, and changing or feeding rooms. Patients might be too embarrassed to take one from the reception room if they think anyone might see them taking it. Make sure that you have your contact information on the brochures and that they look fresh, not torn or faded.

Remember, building a practice should be fun and reflect your passion for chiropractic. Implement some of these ideas and see how your patient base and practice grow.

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