



More Dental Payment Options, Fewer Collections Problems

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Out-of-pocket costs for dental care are rising for patients, thanks to fewer adults having dental insurance and more insurance companies reducing coverage. Where does that leave patients? Usually turning down treatment, especially larger cases, because they simply can't afford it. Or if they do accept treatment, some have difficulty paying for it, resulting in a collection issue for the practice.

To increase case acceptance while reducing overdue collections, Levin Group recommends to its consulting clients that they offer the following four dental payment options to patients:

1. A 5% Discount for Full Pre-Payment on Larger Cases

This option saves patients money by taking care of the entire fee prior to treatment. In addition, it saves the practice time spent on billing and collections. Not many people are able to take advantage of this option, but you might be surprised at the number who do... so make sure to offer it to anyone undergoing extensive treatment.

2. Credit Cards

We are quickly becoming a cashless society, so accepting credit cards is a must. In the 1990s, many dentists resisted the idea of taking credit cards, due to the fees incurred with each transaction. But as credit card usage became ubiquitous, dentists realized that they could collect payment faster and provide greater patient convenience by accepting credit cards. If your practice is one of the few that doesn't take credit cards, you should add them as a payment option.

3. Half Payment Upfront, Half Prior to Completion

For larger cases or phased treatment, many patients like this option because their wallet doesn't take a big hit all at once. However, practices can get into trouble if they fail to collect the remaining balance before the last appointment. At morning meetings, the team should always review what patients are scheduled and if they owe any money.

4. Outside Financing

Prior to the Great Recession, many dentists balked at offering outside financing because they didn't want to pay the transaction fee. However, in the wake of the economic crisis, more and more dentists have added outside financing as a payment option in order to help patients afford recommended treatment. After all, it's better to get 95% of something rather than 100% of nothing. Even though more practices now offer outside financing, many offices have to do a better job of telling patients about this option. With outside financing, practices increase case acceptance, while avoiding any collections issue because they receive payment upfront from the finance company.

Conclusion

Offering patients a choice of payment options is a pre-emptive strategy for reducing overdue collections before they even occur. It enables practices to not only perform more treatment, but also collect a higher percentage of their fees.