



Following Up on Proposed Dental Treatment

By Roger P. Levin, DDS

You recommended dental treatment to the patient, explaining the situation, pointing out the benefits, and answering all questions. Yet the consult did not end in case acceptance. Although the patient didn't say no, she didn't say yes either. She said she would "have to think about it."

Unless experiencing pain or otherwise clearly in need of dental care, patients often hesitate before committing to treatment... especially if it will be costly. Not many years ago, dentists could afford to walk away from such cases and leave it to patients to bring up the subject again. Now, it makes sense for you to follow-up when no decision has been made. The challenge is to do so without applying undue pressure. Here are some suggestions:

- **Indicate you're always available for further discussion.** Before the patient leaves, mention that you'll be happy to answer any further questions or address concerns. This not only leads sometimes to patients bringing up the subject themselves, but also sets the stage for you or a team member to mention the proposed treatment again.
- **Call, text or email the patient several days after the consult.** When a patient's response to your treatment recommendation is "maybe," get in touch, asking if there are any questions or a need for more information... being careful not to push for acceptance. This will be perceived as a courtesy and as evidence that you have taken a personal interest in the patient's well-being.
- **Refer to the proposed treatment during subsequent office visits.** When the patient comes in six months later for a hygiene visit, it's perfectly natural to ask if he's thought more about your recommendation. This opens the door for a conversation that may lead to acceptance. If need be, you can remind the patient of the subject during subsequent appointments. The hygienist can also ask if the patient is still considering the treatment.

- **If there are changes relating to what you recommended, use them as the basis for more discussion.** Further deterioration of the tooth in question, new technology, insurance issues... there are many possible reasons to revisit the treatment proposal with the patient. Any of them could tip the scales in favor of case acceptance.

By looking beyond the initial presentation and developing effective follow-up strategies such as those discussed here, your practice can raise your acceptance rate—and your production—substantially.