

Patient Compliance

By Connie Zicarelli

MANY ADMINISTRATORS AND therapists may think that marketing a clinic means getting out of the office and pounding the pavement to sell your clinic's services to physicians and patients. Your best strategy may already be in your door. When a patient attends therapy for all approved visits, you will experience better patient outcomes while generating more revenue for your practice, and thus a healthier bottom line.

Patient compliance is a vital sign of your practice. It affects clinical outcomes, therapist productivity, reputation with payers, referral sources, and the labor of your

entire practice. So how can administrators and therapists work seamlessly to ensure patient compliance?

At a patient's initial encounter with your practice, the entire team should set the tone for the rehabilitation experience. Every clinic team member should be thought of as the "Director of Patient Experience." It is critical that patients receive a welcoming first impression upon their initial interaction. A warm and inviting tone is set when using phrases such as "We look forward to meeting you," and "Our entire team is here to assist you." Remember, you have only one chance to make a first impression.

Therapists and patients should work collaboratively to paint a picture of success. This involves explaining the importance of the plan of care and the patient's role in compliance. Also important is setting the patient's expectations by creating a road map of success. This road map outlines key checkpoints during the patient's recovery and defines clear goals. When patients are empowered to assist in the creation of their recovery plan, they are more likely to stay compliant with it.

During the patient's treatment plan, the therapist has many opportunities to build good habits of compliance.



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Asking patients proactively how they feel they are progressing through therapy is a good indicator of where they are on their journey to recovery. Should a patient begin to miss appointments, one method that has been shown to resolve cancellations is to encourage the therapist to discuss issues directly with the patient. This interaction can uncover the reasons behind the cancellation, such as whether the patient is apprehensive about the treatment, has financial concerns, or is indifferent toward rehab.

With co-pays and coinsurance costs rising, administrators and therapists have to work together to explain the value of physical therapy to their patients. When patients understand this value, they are more likely to remain dedicated to their treatment program. Focusing on internal marketing through enhanced compliance will lead to a more robust bottom line and shift your energy away from pounding the pavement for new revenue sources. ■

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