

## **Recare System—The Life Blood of Many Dental Practices**

No matter how many new patients are attracted to an office via various marketing techniques including online, print media, the dentist's community visibility, and word of mouth, a dental practice will not reach and maintain its potential unless the Recare System is effective. If new patients come in through the front door and are lost out the back door because no consistent system is in place to retain them, a practice will not thrive and grow.

The most effective Recare System is pre-appointed---the patient leaves today's appointment with the next hygiene appointment scheduled. Preferably, the next recare appointment is made by the hygienist at the chairside computer. If not possible, the patient should be scheduled at the front desk as he/she checks out.

Hint to the team member scheduling the next appointment: never ask, "Would you like to schedule your next hygiene appointment?" A response of "No." is too easy. Rather say, "Let's go ahead and schedule your next hygiene appointment while the time you prefer is still available."

A recare card mailed as a reminder about two weeks prior to the next appointment followed by an email reminder one week ahead and a telephone confirmation two or three days prior is an effective combination to assure the patient keeps the appointment.

Those patients who "no-show" in spite of reminders should be called, preferably on the day of the broken appointment. At the end of each month, one staff member should be responsible for contacting all patients who have not been reappointed. Such contacts are necessary to maintain an effective Recare System.

Another vitally important step: check the Recare System effectiveness rate at least quarterly, based on the number of active patients in the practice. "Active" is defined as a patient seen within the preceding 18 months in a pediatric dental practice; within 24 months in a general or periodontic office. Obviously, single visit emergencies who never return are not counted. A realistic goal in a fairly stable community is 70% to 80% of active patients returning regularly for recare.

In summary, a solid Recare System is the link that holds patients in your practice, and its productivity is the life blood of your practice. The time and work necessary to operate an effective system are well worth the effort.