

Successful communication in your daily practice

Part XII: Turning medical tourists into loyal patients

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This series covers the most common and demanding scenarios that might arise in your dental practice and presents successful ways to manage them in order for you to enjoy greater peace of mind. Each article of this series teaches you a new, easy-to-use specialised protocol which can easily be applied and adapted to your own dental clinic's requirements from the outset.

There are many more interesting aspects of the topic of medical tourism to explore that you, as the leader of your clinic, can capitalise on. The topic of medical tourism is quite a broad one and it is a special field in and by itself. Therefore, our efforts should be concentrated and focused. Today's challenging topic deals with how to turn your newly won patients who came to you as medical

tourists into loyal advocates who will promote your practice in their respective home countries. In the following, five effective and easy steps will be discussed that are crucial to retaining a relationship with medical tourism patients in order to make them loyal advocates.

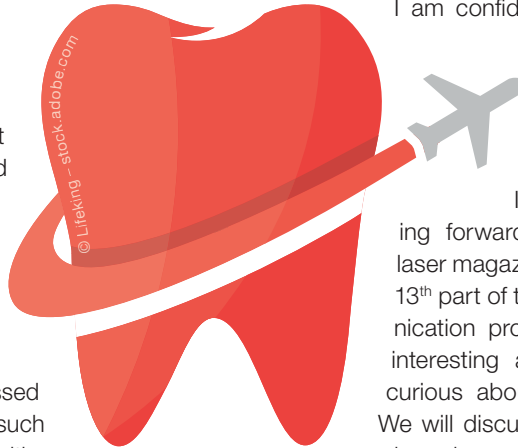
Step 1

Send the patient an e-mail immediately after the treatment and wish him or her safe travels back home. Use the opportunity to also thank the patient for visiting your clinic and to remind him or her via e-mail of the advice that you gave him or her during treatment. This is your chance to refresh your patient's memory about the many benefits of the therapy for him or her.

Say that you carried out root canal therapy, in which you additionally used a dental laser in order to sterilise both the main and lateral canals of the tooth. The tooth might be a bit sensitive for a few days thereafter. However, in the e-mail you should emphasise the benefits of sterilising the main and lateral canals by means of a laser, in that it significantly increases the success rate of the treatment (compared with conventional root canal therapy, without the use of a laser).

Step 2

Send a second e-mail to the patient after one week with a full and detailed report of the treatment that he or she has undergone. If you give warranties for certain treatments, such as for restorations, you should attach these. In addition, you should attach any document regarding information that you might have discussed with the patient during his or her stay, such as tips on brushing techniques or nutrition, based on his or her individual lifestyle.



Step 3

One week after the second e-mail, you should send the patient another e-mail, this time featuring your proposed treatment plans for the future. For example, if the patient needs further treatment, then he or she should be informed of the costs involved, the time frames and, of course, the benefits of the therapy. In this third e-mail, emphasise the benefits for the patient's overall health and improvements to his or her attractiveness and lifestyle.

Step 4

One month after the patient has left the clinic, you should send him or her a fourth e-mail. However, you must remember: never ask him or her whether he or she is okay or not. Why? Because all human beings love to complain. Rather tell him or her that you want to check in on him or her to make sure that everything has gone according to his or her wishes and expectations regarding the treatment. Also, thank him or her one more time for choosing your clinic and for his or her trust in you.

Step 5

As a last step, send the patient an e-mail on his or her birthday or name day, wishing him or her all the best for the future. In addition, you could send him or her best wishes on the relevant religious holidays via e-mail. In doing so, you will make your patient feel special and acknowledged by you, his or her dentist. As a result, his or her trust in you will likely be bolstered.

That was easy, wasn't it?

Use the above-mentioned steps as a protocol in your daily practice and you will soon notice an influx of new patients from abroad and—most importantly—feel in control of this new situation. You now know the exact steps required to turn medical tourists from abroad into loyal advocates of your practice. Moreover, I am confident that you will most likely experience an increase in income as a consequence. Just try it and let me know what you think!

I am sure that you are looking forward to the next issue of the laser magazine, in which I will present the 13th part of this unique series on communication protocols and consider further interesting and useful topics. Are you curious about what's coming up next? We will discuss how to deal with difficult, rude and annoying patients effectively. There are most likely patients that you feel nervous and anxious about each time they visit your practice. In the next article, I will teach you the five most important points that will help you to stay sane and focused when you are dealing with these dreaded patients.

about the author



Dr Anna Maria Yiannikos (DDS, LSO, MSc, MBA) is one of the first two women worldwide to have obtained a master's degree in laser dentistry. She has owned a dental clinic for 30 years now and leads the innovative Dental Business Administration Mastership Course at RWTH Aachen University in Germany. She is an adjunct faculty member of the Aachen Center for Laser Dentistry.

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