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Better Management is Better Medicine®

Be Proactive, Not Reactive – 2007

Too many practices have delegated responsibility for scheduling patient care to their clients. This works well if you've got an effective client education program in place and clients who comply with all of your recommendations the first time. But if your educational efforts lag, your client visitation may drop below your established targets. Here are three steps to take to ensure your patients visit when you want them to.

Practice proactive scheduling. Take responsibility for making sure recommended healthcare happens. Doing so shows you're concerned with the pet's health, believe in your recommendations, and want to make it convenient for your clients to schedule appointments. Schedule the pet's next appointment for recommended care at the conclusion of their current visit. If the client isn't able to schedule that day, call two to three days later to schedule the appointment. If the client is still not able to schedule, follow up with a written reminder. Target an 80 percent to 90 percent scheduling rate.

Follow up on reminders. Don't assume that clients who haven't responded to your written reminders won't be back. Scheduling their pet's appointment is one more thing they must think about and remember to do. And sometimes the most conscientious pet parents get busy and forget. So make their lives just a little bit easier by calling them. Practices who follow up on reminders typically reach a 25 percent to 30 percent scheduling rate or higher. The results are worth the effort – good for the patient, good for the client, and good for the practice.

Offer to schedule an appointment for all potential new client callers. Your client services team may do an excellent job of providing information when potential clients call, but they're missing an opportunity by not offering to schedule an appointment each time. Too many receptionists leave it up to the caller to ask. Show them you want them as a client by offering first.

To obtain additional information:

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