


Increase Your Capacity for Growth

BY PATRICIA GAYMAN, DC



You are planning a big marketing event and you imagine hordes of new patients increasing your patient volume and your income. Are you really ready? You probably answered "Of course!" But wait! There are some critical areas that must be addressed if you are really going to have a successful event that results in a long-term increase in your practice.

1. Can you handle the volume?

- Do you have specific times set aside to see new patients in your existing schedule? Or does every new patient cause a time warp in your practice? Are you hustling to see your existing patients while working in a consultation, an exam and the all-important report of findings? If so, it is more likely that you will lose than gain patients with this scenario over the long term.
- Calculate your capacity for adding patients by doing a time study. Have your CA note the time patients are actually seen by you, and what time you send them back to the front desk. Do this on your busiest days and your slowest days for as long as needed to come up with a true average amount of time spent with each patient.
- Next, look at the hours you have scheduled for patient care and determine the exact number of people you could potentially see each week. Remember that this must also include time for *all* new patient procedures.
- Then calculate in the amount of administrative time you spend processing reports, forms and other necessary paperwork. When will you take care of the business of practice? If the business aspects become overwhelming, or you are not able to attend to the necessary details, you will see the results in your collections and patient compliance. Gradually you or your staff will begin to sub-consciously block new patients from coming in.

2. Does your staff share your goals?

- If your staff already feels overworked and unappreciated no matter how hard they try, there will be a subtle energy that undermines your best efforts.
- Build your team and get "buy-in" from them from the very beginning. Ask them what they need to feel like adding new patients is a great idea, and they not only will they be able to handle it, they will be enthusiastic about it.
- Staff training and team building are subjects of their own, but rest assured that they are as important to the success of your office as your clinical skills!

3. Get your house in order!

- Run an "excellence check" on your office. Does it reflect the quality and attention to detail a person has the right to expect from your care? If there is clutter, cobwebs, dust bunnies or a stale smell, people will get a less than positive impression of you and your office. So clean house, clean up your act and make sure the office, you and the CA reflect the quality of your care!
- When was the last time you reviewed your procedures? Are they consistent? Has your CA received adequate training in pro-

cedures so that people will know what to expect and what will happen if they refer someone to your office. People are more likely to refer if they are confident that others will have the same positive experience they had.

- Treat each person as a VIP! Imagine someone you admire and respect very much came into your office as a patient. How would you treat that person? Each patient deserves exactly that kind of behavior from you. Yes, even the ones who are sometimes difficult or, heaven forbid, those you have prejudged and are just sure they will not be the kind of person who will keep appointments, pay as agreed or get the big idea about the value of chiropractic care!

4. Build for long-term growth.

- Your forms and intake procedures should be patient-friendly and not designed only for insurance and HIPAA compliance! Your consultation and the way the CA handles the "necessary" paperwork sets the tone for the kind of patient that new person will become.
- The *Consultation* is a time for you to listen attentively! It is the other person's turn to be heard. Listening skills are one of the most important things needed for good communication. This is the right time to let them talk about their symptoms.
- It is your turn to be heard during the *Report of Findings*. You do perform one and give a written summary to the patient, *don't you?* When was the last time you recorded yourself giving a ROF to a live person? (Be sure to get written permission first.) This is NOT the time to tell them most of what you know about chiropractic! They only want to know four things, so tell them, and then get on with the next step. (If you don't know what the four things are, call me and I'll tell you.)
- In the *Plan of Care* tell them what to expect, and remember to tell the truth, not what you think they will accept! Chiropractic care is a process not an event! An event like an adjustment is not going to correct their subluxation permanently or allow time for whatever healing Innate has in store for their symptoms. Remember correction takes longer than symptom relief! Wellness care, and the practice member's decision to choose it, is also a process that requires consistent education on your part.
- *Scheduling* the Plan of Care should include the entire time given in the Report. If the initial phase of care is 4 or 6 weeks, schedule the patient for the entire 4 to 6 weeks, up to and including the re-evaluation visit. CA's are sometimes resistant to doing this, claiming the patients don't want to commit that far ahead. With training it becomes easier for them than scheduling on each visit, and it shows the patient that they are expected to make a commitment to the care they agreed to. Multiple Appointment Plans (MAP) are a valuable procedure to implement if you do not already use them.
- Do *re-evaluations* on a regular basis and people will not get the impression that you intend to "keep them coming back forever." They will see that you are looking for progress and will make adaptations to your delivery of the adjustments if necessary. Always make sure that you give a

mini Report of Findings on the re-examination. Both the exam and the report are condensed versions of the originals, and should also be followed with a new plan of care and the appropriate MAP.

- Have your *PEP* in place! You may give a brilliant ROF but if you fail to have a *Patient Education Plan* that consistently points out the difference between chiropractic care and allopathic care, and shows your patients the many benefits of chiropractic for people of all ages, you will have a very hard time building a practice of lifetime patients who see the value of their care, are willing to pay for it, and who refer others.

This may all seem a little daunting when all you really wanted to do is have a well planned marketing event and attract some new patients to your office. But if you take the time necessary to check your energy and your capacity for providing quality, compassionate care in a supportive environment to a large number of people, you will build a thriving practice on a solid foundation. Then you will not only have a practice bursting with lifetime wellness patients, you will continue to enjoy a practice with greater profitability and a great sense of fulfillment.

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event, rather than a process. In the weight loss industry, this widely-held belief is called the "yo-yo diet." As soon as the individual attains their goal, they return to their old diet and old sedentary lifestyle. Same with chiropractic patients. Many see their symptoms as merely an episode that needs some temporary attention from "bending over funny" the week before.

Action step: Ask patients how long they think they've had their problem. Ask them how long they think it will take to fix it. Ask them why they think patients who show up once or twice a month feeling great continue to do so. Ask them how long they would need to eat healthful foods, exercise, bathe and brush their teeth to best assure good health?

Patients do what they do to be congruent with their beliefs. If you're to have any hope of transforming their counterproductive health behaviors, work on their beliefs. The first place to start is to uncover them! Many aren't even aware of the underlying beliefs that prompt their behaviors.

If you want to change the world, removing subluxations is a good start. But imagine the revolution you foment when instead of merely reducing nerve interference you change a patient's beliefs. With the former, you restore what was. In the latter, you help manifest what could be.

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