

# FRONT OFFICE *Rocks*®

The Leader in Dental Front Office Solutions & Training

## Patients Running Late

On occasion, patients will run late for any number of reasons. If they are only late by a couple of minutes the impact is minimal, but if the patient is going to be 15 minutes late or more a quick assessment must be made to see if that will be acceptable.

When a patient calls to say they are going to be late, it is the responsibility of the employee that is handling that patient to determine how realistically late they are going to be. It is ok to ask questions. For example: they say they are running 10 min late but they are in a town 30 minutes from the office, more than likely they will not be there in 10 min. This data gathering needs to be done to help determine when the patient will realistically arrive.

In general, an adult patient who has an hour-long appointment scheduled and calls to say he will be 15 minute late is better off rescheduled. While it is always the goal to have a full schedule the side effects of throwing it off can be stressful and unnecessarily affect other patients. Alternatively, an 8 year old patient who doesn't need radiographs at his RECARE could possibly be 20 minutes late without a negative impact to the schedule.

Consider:

- Is the next appointment open?
- Is there another hygienist available within a short about of time?
- Is the late patient a child or mostly edentulous (without teeth)
- Can they come later the same day

Do not have the **RECARE** patient come in late if it will upset the rest of the day's schedule.

If a patient is allowed to come in and the schedule is at risk of being disrupted for other on time patients, an option may be to look to reduce the appointment length by considering such things as putting off full probings, reducing hand scaling, taking images with the doctor as opposed to yourself, limit small talk that distracts from treatment.

If there is only 45 minutes for a prophylaxis and there is just too much stain or supragingival calculus to fully remove – your Prophylaxis was **completed**, but the patient needs additional treatment, such as a second Prophy or Gingival Therapy which they are financially obligated.

***We should always try to accommodate new patients, within reason. If the new patient is too late to get the entire appointment completed, then at the least try to have all the intro paperwork filled out, Medical history reviewed, FMX, Doc Exam – That way the patient can come back for the prophy another day.***