

INTRA-OFFICE COMMUNICATION

One of my favorite quotes sums up one of the biggest challenges we face every day in our dental practices—the accurate exchange of critical information.

I know you believe that you understand what you think I said. But I'm not sure you realize that what you heard is not what I meant!

Truth be known, in most offices questions, comments, and answers fly back and forth as fast as a drill can drill. Too many questions during a busy, stressful day interrupt our focus on the patient. They most often result in negative, unproductive reactions instead of well thought out, supportive responses.

Successful intra-office communication relies on four critical elements: timing, topic, tone, and thoroughness. A poorly timed question about a touchy topic asked in a negative tone results in an incomplete answer and increases stress for everyone, including the patient who witnesses it.

We can't always control the topic, but we can control the timing, tone, and thoroughness of our communication by using intra-office memos for everything that does not need an immediate response. By customizing a memo to fit our communication needs, we can make them as simple as checking a few boxes and writing a few words. We can also color code them to visually indicate the urgency or non-urgency of the necessary response.

More paperwork? "If it ain't broke, don't fix it?" Yet if your office is like many others, a little less talking and a few more notes can work wonders by decreasing stress and increasing understanding. I encourage you to try the "silent" communication method for one week and see what a difference it makes in the attention your patients receive, the thoroughness of the information exchanged, and the office "tone" during stressful times.

MEMO	
Red = ASAP	Yellow = Today
Green = by _____	White = FYI
TO:	
FROM:	
DATE:	
TIME:	REPLY BY:
PATIENT:	
NAME:	
Please call #	_____
REGARDING	
Save Me!	
Appointment	
# of units	
Lab case	
Dup X-ray	
Rx	
Narrative	
Other	
INSURANCE	
Denied	
Letter	
Missing teeth	
Date of exts.	
Initial placement date	
Route to:	
COMMENTS:	
REPLY:	
OVER	