

Can nervous patients really become fans of your practice?

Laura Horton discusses how nervous patients become the patients who value you the most

During my years as a Treatment Coordinator I saw a wealth of patients who were nervous of treatment. Petrified even. These patients had not attended a dental practice for years. During this time the patients would provide themselves with many excuses to not visit a dentist even if they were in pain. I know this as I used to ask them! The majority of new patients that I would see were nervous. I am always asked: “why so many nervous patients?” The answer to that question is simply effective marketing drawing those patients to the practice.

Although nervous patients are concerned with the health of their mouth, the majority are suffering with the side effects of poor dental health. Their teeth, and therefore their smile, has deteriorated. These patients are not only anxious of the dentist but also of smiling. Social situations become a living nightmare. These patients are comfortable with their friends and family but meeting new people can become very stressful. No-one likes to feel as if others are being judgmental and nobody wishes to have a lack of self confidence. So these patients are being held back in many aspects of their life due to their fear of the dentist.

These patients need the help not only of a dentist but also the care of a team who are encouraging and supportive to the patient's needs and desires.

Attracting nervous patients

So how do you attract these patients to the practice in the first place? A simple way to them within your marketing is to advertise free initial consultations. I know that dentists cannot afford to offer free consultations that bring



Laura travels throughout the UK bringing her unique Treatment Coordinator programme direct to you. The training Laura Horton Consulting provides is bespoke to suit your practices goals and vision. All training is in-house

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great value to your new patients. Also with nervous patients you do not want to rush the patient. The solution is to place a Treatment Coordinator into your practice.

Put yourself in the shoes of a nervous patient: Not only are you suffering with the social complications of poor dental health - you need treatment, this is a fact. You see an advert for a dental practice that clearly states they offer excellent care and they are devoted to treating nervous patients. They have a few bullet points which state the ways they can help, and they offer free initial consultations. You contact the practice and you are told that the appointment is not in a dental room and is with a lovely team member called Sophie. You can visit Sophie for a chat and a coffee, and you can even bring a friend. There is no fee to pay and you do not see a dentist. If you like the practice and feel comfortable you are more than welcome to book an appointment with the dentist, however there is no obligation to do so. Sold? I am. I know that is slightly biased, however I have witnessed this for many years.

Kathy Howell (Treatment Coordinator at The Perfect Smile Spa) confirmed with me: ‘The main group of new patients we see here are very nervous. They choose to come here as they do not have to see a dentist first of all. They do not have to pay for the appointment with me either. Nervous patients do not want to part with money for examinations when they do not even know how they feel about the practice. The most important part of my role is to listen to the patient, build a solid relationship, investigate, and reassure them – each patient is nervous for different reasons. If they like the practice then I take care of them by scheduling their appointment to see the dentist.

When they come back I introduce the patient and dentist to each other making sure he now knows all of the patients concerns about treatment. It is quite rare for a new patient to not schedule an examination with a dentist. They feel very happy once they are here. Making the first step is always the hardest; if you have a caring team you can really help these patients for the long term. Their treatment plans vary to suit their budget and goals. However most want to have a smile they no longer have to hide’. Now the patient has met the team, seen the

Treatment Coordinator and now they meet the dentist. They have been wowed with the experience – it was different to the last time they attended a dentist – teas, coffee, and nice aromas! They are cared for throughout the examination and have a positive dental experience for the first time in years. They are now a happy patient – they also feel good about themselves for taking this big step.

Imagine knowing the patients budget for treatment before you have even met them. This means you can treatment plan the best options and alternatives and the one to suit their budget. This way your new patient is going to take up their treatment. There is no point offering a treatment plan for £6000 when the patient has a budget of £2000.

The happy patient

What happens when patients are wowed and have a life changing experience? They tell people. Their friends see them come through the other side and your nervous patient will then recommend their family and friends. They will become your best referral source because they value the dentistry, the team, and the care you provide.

Having new patients through referral of existing patients is a great way to market your practice. It is also a great compliment to the hard work everyone puts in every day.

Attracting nervous patients to your practice through a Treatment Coordinator is the most rewarding type of dentistry for all the team as well as the dentist. You can be the person responsible for changing someone's viewpoint and helping them conquer the fears that have so far affected their life in more ways than you can imagine.

There are many benefits to having a Treatment Coordinator in your practice besides free consultations – at no cost to the practice. A TCO will increase the practice revenue by improving the ratio of accepted treatment plans, act as a USP, and explode your patient's experience. And your previously nervous patients will refer other new patients to you.

You may contact Laura to discuss the placement of this role into your practice and take advantage of Laura Horton Consulting first birthday offers. Quote code ADT1. T+C apply. **A**