

DELIVERING PREMIUM PRACTICE

THE NURSE'S PERSPECTIVE

You've prepared your patient for their treatment, but a nurse's job certainly does not end here. In part two of her feature for dental nurses, Laura Horton provides some useful tips on personalising the care-giving process during and after treatment to make your patient feel even more special



So, your patient is the chair, ready for their treatment. They're comfortable, at the right temperature and listening to their favourite music. As the treatment gets underway, at this stage in the process, the nurse's most important job is to watch a patient's body language at all times for signs of distress. If you do see a change, you must tell the patient to put their hand up, to signal for treatment to stop, so you can then alert the dentist.

PERSONAL SERVICE

With your eye on your patient as their treatment continues, there are also lots of little

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things you can do that will go a long way to adding to a patient's positive experience. For example, it's very common for most patients to turn their phones off before treatment, but some patients either forget to do this, or don't want to as they may miss an important call.

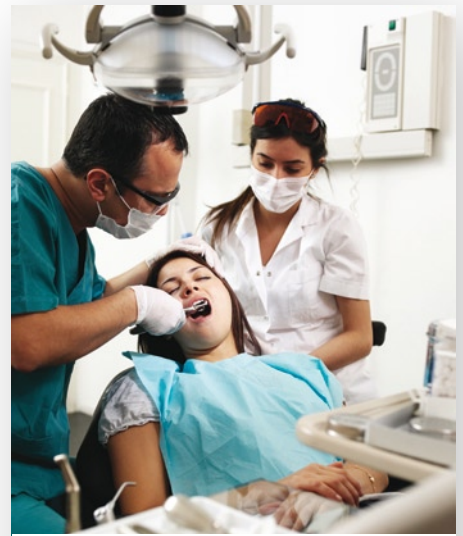
Whatever the situation, it's important that they know they are free to leave their phones on, so why not offer to answer it and take a message if it rings? Patients love this personal aspect of their care as it makes them feel particularly special and looked after.

FINISHING TOUCHES

Once the dentist has left the room, the dental nurse then takes over. Normally in practice, this is the time a nurse can be seen and heard rushing around, banging, clanging, and trying to get the room turned around for the next patient. If a nurse is to deliver consistently good customer service to patients, she needs enough time at the beginning and end of each appointment to provide this service.

Before she does this though, she needs to make sure the patient is looked after before they are whisked out of the surgery. It's essential that there's a mirror in the treatment room so the patient can look at their teeth after treatment.

It's also important that your patient has the opportunity to freshen up after treatment, in a relaxing space where they won't feel rushed. You could also supply some products for them to freshen up with, such as a disposable hairbrush, disposable toothbrush, toothpaste and face wipes. Giving them time to freshen up means they're not going to be embarrassed if they see anybody when they leave, and will



The nurse must watch a patient's body language during treatment for signs of distress

feel like themselves again.

To freshen a patient's mouth, at the practice I used to work, we would regularly offer them sorbet after long appointments or prep work. It really helps to refresh the mouth and it does not affect anyone with dairy allergies. While the patient is re-organising their hair and makeup, the dental nurse can prepare this along with anything else they might want, such as tea, coffee or iced water.

LOOKING GOOD

In the first part of this article, I talked about how the dental nurse needs to offer the patient words of encouragement before treatment so they know what's in store for them. The same applies at the end of the appointment, too. If your patient's having any cosmetic work done,



It's important to give a patient time to freshen up after treatment

it's important that their pre-op photograph is displayed and the nurse makes a fuss of their patient and tells them how their teeth look after treatment.

Some nurses are trained in photography and radiography so they are able to take photographs pre-op, post-op, throughout treatment, import them into Powerpoint documents, send them to the lab and photograph the lab work when it returns.

FOLLOW UP

When the patient has finished their treatment for the day, make sure you carry out a follow-up call to find out if they're happy with their treatment. It's common in many practices for the front desk or the nurses to call them the next day. The nurse could also send out a card including before and after pictures. By spending time with your patients and make them feel special, dental nurses can really help to take the practice forward.

The patient must leave believing that their dental nurse is absolutely exceptional; nothing else will do.

KEY POINTS

- Watch the patient for signs of distress
- Alert the dentist if necessary
- Answer the patient's phone during treatment
- After treatment, offer toiletries and refreshments
- Speak positively about the results of treatment
- Follow-up with a telephone call

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