

Your 7 Keys to Increased Profits

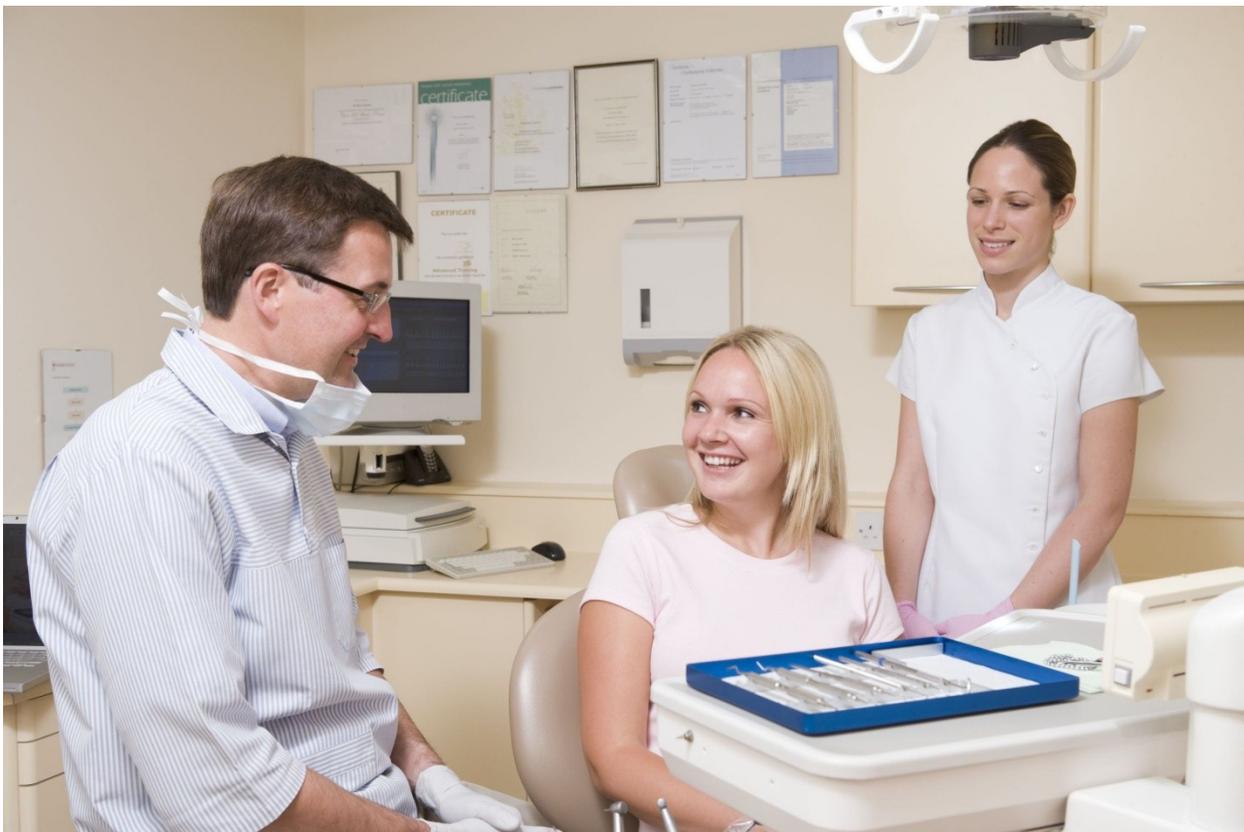


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INTRODUCTION

Do you have a system in place to maintain relationships with your valuable patients? If not, ***your dental practice may be in trouble!*** Are you losing money on advertising for new patients? Are your current patients missing appointments for preventive care dental services? I created this specially-designed gift to share my knowledge on how to build relationships with patients and partner with you to increase profits in your dental practice. If you are ready to solve your patient retention challenges, I have the solution for you!

Your goal of increasing profits is within reach. All you need to do is follow ***four simple guidelines.*** I believe my system is the best way to strengthen ties with your current patients – the lifeblood of your dental practice. The following keys will motivate overdue patients to return for preventive care services. Using four simple keys you can establish a system of connecting with your patients, using benchmarks to communicate with them on a regular basis. Once they know you ***care*** about their well-being, the end result is a loyal base of committed patients that will return to your office ***again and again!*** **PLUS** these are your raving fans who are most likely to tell everyone about your dental office!

In this book, you will learn:

- Communication skills and how they benefit your patients.
- When to begin follow-up with your unscheduled patients.
- One ***essential*** task you need to do during each patient visit to keep them on the schedule.
- How and when to measure your results.
- How to keep 98% of your hygiene patients on the schedule.

Are you ready for the Four Simple Keys?

Four Simple Keys: Implementing the Continuing C.A.R.E. System

Attracting a new patient can cost five times as much as maintaining a relationship with an existing patient. Implementing this Continuing C.A.R.E. System will help you retain valuable patients and keep them returning - on a regular basis - for essential dental hygiene and preventive care appointments.

Investing in a patient retention strategy such as this Continuing C.A.R.E. System will keep your profits consistent and decrease the amount of time and money spent on advertising for new patients. Never assume that an overdue patient won't return to your practice. Many times, patients appreciate your efforts to reconnect with them. When patients know they matter to you, their loyalty to your dental practice will grow. The Continuing C.A.R.E. System consists of four concepts rooted in effective communication: **C**onsistent Communication, **A**dvanced Scheduling, **R**easonable Payment Options, and **E**fficient Planning. Combined, these steps will help motivate inactive patients and revitalize your dental practice.

Rule One: Consistent Communication

Establishing a system of connecting with your patients is essential to building and maintaining relationships. Set benchmarks – a series of time periods - to communicate with your patients and bring them back to your office on a continuous basis. Consistent communication consists of: phone calls, letters, postcards, and even electronic communication. During each set time period, you should attempt to contact patients and remind them about preventive care appointments. For unscheduled patients, consider sending a letter or postcard reminding them to schedule an appointment. During every patient communication, provide information about the oral health/systemic health link, the increase in oral cancer, the importance of ongoing professional dental care and how much you value their overall health. Consistent communication also gives you the perfect chance to educate patients about new techniques, technology and services available in your office, options for achieving that sought after smile, and continuing education programs your team has completed that will benefit the patient.

To re-establish connections with overdue patients, start with your most recent list of overdue patients. Generate a report listing patients past due for continuing care in the past 18 months. When communicating with unscheduled patients, include the information listed above, stressing the importance the scheduling preventive dental care services as soon as possible.

Rule Two: Advanced Scheduling

Make every attempt to schedule the next dental hygiene appointment at the end of each dental hygiene preventive appointment. Experience shows that you can potentially lose over 80% of your active patients when they don't make advanced arrangements for their next dental appointments. During each visit, it is important for the hygienist to educate all patients about the value and benefits of regular preventive care. Communicate all the important assessments and services accomplished during the dental hygiene appointment. Many patients are not aware that a dental hygiene appointment really is *more than just a cleaning*. This is how everyone can live a longer and healthier life! ***Have you ever met someone who didn't want to live a longer and healthier life?*** Neither have I!

There is no doubt that without optimal oral health, our overall health can and very likely *will* fail. The philosophy of every dental practice today should include the science about oral health and the relationship it plays in our overall health. When patients understand you care enough about their total health, they are more likely to sit up, listen, and schedule their dental appointments. They will even ***refer their friends and family*** to your dental office. Advanced scheduling can result in a full calendar of patients, leading to optimal patient care and healthy profits to your dental practice!

Rule Three: Reasonable Payment Options

It is possible that many of your patients today are experiencing financial challenges and educating them about your dental practice's *flexible payment options* is essential to bringing them back for regular preventive care appointments. Establishing relationships with patient financing companies will make treatment for your patients more accessible and affordable. When patients know that dental care can fit within their budgets they are more likely to proceed with necessary ***and*** elective dental services. When communicating with current and overdue patients, inform them of your offices' flexible payment options to pay for dental care.

Rule Four: Effective Planning

Create a plan outlining daily or weekly responsibilities with the end goal of contacting inactive patients and scheduling appointments. When hygienists have daily cancellations, they can play a vital role in contacting and connecting with overdue patients. Since the dental hygienist spends valuable alone time with patients, several times each year, they get to know the patients well and understand *exactly WHY* they need to return for routine care.

Implement Effective Planning by setting goals to:

- Run your *unscheduled* continuing care report. (Patients on a list who has an unscheduled hygiene appointment.)
- Call a specific number of overdue and inactive hygiene patients daily.
- Schedule a specific number of overdue/inactive patient appointments. (Set a daily goal.)
- Create a blocked schedule ensuring that each hygienist achieves a specific daily production goal. (Create a blocked or tiered schedule for the RDH to see patients for New Patients, SRP, Sealants and Caries Risk Management Patients: returning for: F2/biofilm \checkmark and FMX, etc.)
- Establish treatment plan goals and monitor your scheduled treatment.
- Monitor your continuing care report. (What is working, challenges, suggestions, etc?)
- Ask a front office auxiliary to provide a monthly continuing care success and strategy report at the monthly team meeting.
- Throughout the year, plan to assess, strategize, and create incentives to motivate your overdue and inactive patients to return for services. Many times, when you contact overdue and inactive patients, they have no idea how long it's been since their last hygiene appointment. Time really does fly by!

ESTABLISHING CONSISTENT COMMUNICATION

Purpose:

A successful Continuing C.A.R.E. system will focus primarily on scheduling of the unscheduled dental hygiene patients. Even when 98% of dental hygiene appointments are pre-scheduled, there are still no shows and changed appointments. Also, it becomes the dental practice's responsibility to contact patients when they fail to schedule appointments during regular visits. When patients leave your office without scheduling their next appointment, contact them as soon as possible to make arrangements for their next visit. (This is a legal and ethical point that we won't get into in this book.)

Remember, consistent communication is essential to building and maintaining patients. It is also an effective tool for reaching out to inactive patients. The following letters are intended to both notify patients they are due or overdue for continuing care and to inform them of the risks involved if they do not seek the recommended hygiene treatment.

Instructions:

Establishing consistent communication begins in the dental office during a visit. Here, in the office, they can schedule their next appointment. When a patient, for some reason, can't schedule their next appointment and before a patient leaves the office on the day of their current appointment, ask "When is the best time to reach you so we can schedule your next dental hygiene appointment?" You should, at this point, also state the benefits and specific reasons why it is important to schedule the next hygiene appointment prior to leaving the office. (Create benefits and urgency for continued care.)

If patients don't schedule an appointment during their visit, consider making a follow-up call within a specified time after their visit, preferably within one week. If a follow-up call fails, you can send a letter to ensure patients have been notified and informed of the risks should they not return in a timely manner for their preventive dental hygiene appointment.

Consistent Communication: Sample Patient Continuing C.A.R.E. Letters

Sample Letter 1:

Letter for Patient who is due for Hygiene Appointment:

Always add information about specific concerns -- specific to the patient. For example: bleeding, mobility, outstanding treatment, etc.

Date:

Dear _____,

While reviewing your chart, I realized it has been _____ months since your last dental hygiene, preventive care visit. Maintaining your oral health is an important part of a healthy lifestyle. Regular preventive care appointments can ensure good overall health. We encourage you to contact our office as soon as possible to schedule this important appointment.

Your dental hygiene appointments are critical to sustaining your overall health and helping to prevent future dental problems. Your appointment entails much more than a cleaning, as we examine and hard and soft tissues in your mouth, check for decay, provide a complimentary oral cancer screening, other various oral health screenings and give you tips to help you maintain a healthy smile in between visits to our office. We are committed to your dental care and want to help you achieve your desired oral health results.

If you have any questions and/or would like to schedule your next appointment, please call us at *(enter practice phone number)*. We hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,

(enter doctor's name and practice name)

Sample Letter 2:

Letter for Patient Overdue approximately 9 or more months

Always add information about specific concerns specific to the patient. For example: bleeding, mobility, outstanding treatment.

Date:

Dear _____,

Our records show it has been _____ months since your last preventive dental care visit. We are concerned you are not receiving regular dental hygiene preventive care, which is critical to sustaining your oral health, overall health and will prevent future dental problems. We have attempted to contact you without success. Please contact our office as soon as possible to schedule this important appointment. We care about your overall health and want to eliminate unnecessary costs, pain and time spent in the dental office.

Your appointment entails much more than a cleaning, as we examine and hard and soft tissues in your mouth, check for decay, provide a complimentary oral cancer screening, other various oral health screenings and give you tips to help you maintain a healthy smile in between visits to our office.

We are committed to your dental care and want to help you achieve your desired oral health results.

If you have any questions and/or need to schedule your next appointment, please call us at *(enter practice phone number)*. We hope to hear from you very soon.

Sincerely,
(enter doctor's name and practice name)

Sample Letter 3: Overdue approximately 12-18 months.

This is a sample patient letter that is meant to be sent to patients who have not responded to telephone attempts or previous letters to schedule their hygiene appointments. It may be modified for your practice. This letter is usually sent approximately 12- 18 months after the patient is overdue. This letter has worked well to send in a SASE as a last attempt prior to inactivating a patient.

Date:

Dear _____,

It has been quite some time since you have been in for dental care. We have made several unsuccessful attempts to contact you by telephone. It is our responsibility to inform you that regular dental visits are absolutely essential to maintaining good oral and your overall health. Please understand if disease exists and is left untreated it can lead to other more serious health problems.

If you are avoiding treatment because of fear, there are many ways to minimize this common problem. If you are experiencing financial hardship at this time, we have a variety of flexible payment options available to help you continue with your dental care. If you have transferred to another dentist, we will be pleased to know you are in capable hands. Please contact us and allow us to update our records with appropriate information by calling or returning the bottom of this letter in the enclosed envelope.

Sincerely,
(enter doctor's name and practice name)

Please tear off this bottom half and return in the SASE

____ Sorry that I have not scheduled. Please have your office call me as soon as possible to schedule a continuing care appointment.

The best number to reach me is _____.
The best time to reach me is _____.
Please call me at _____ so we can discuss my situation.

Fear is keeping me away ____ You are not a provider for my dental plan. _____
I cannot afford dental care at this time. ____ I have moved from the area. _____
I have found a new dentist. ____ Other: _____

____ Thank you for your concern, I will not be returning because:

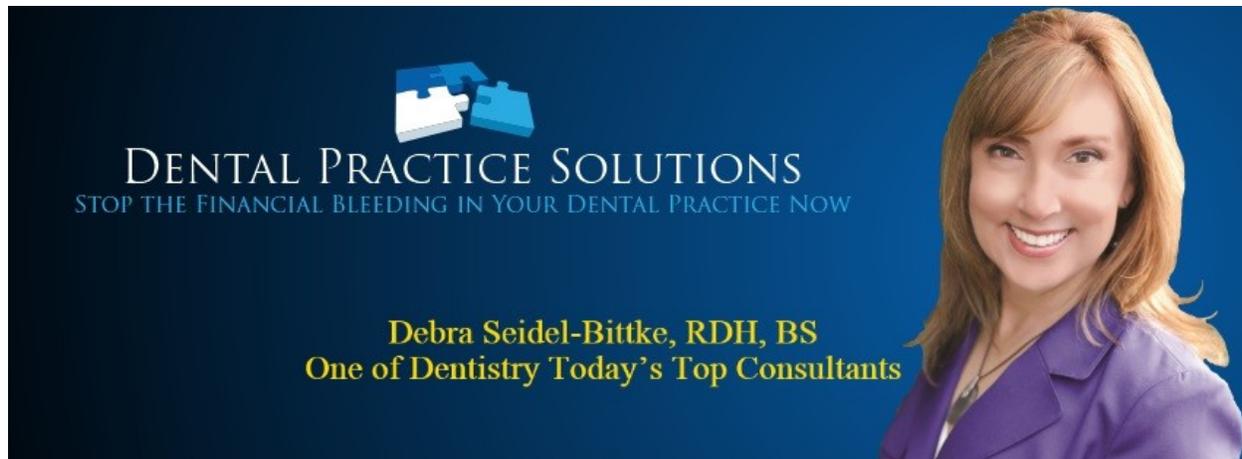
Transfer my records to:

Signature: _____ Date: _____

THE 7 KEYS TO C.A.R.E.

1. Follow up with patients by phone as soon as possible to schedule their next visit when their next visit is unscheduled.
2. If there is no response to a phone call, send the first letter.
3. Send the second letter if patients do not schedule within 6 months - if not sooner.
4. Send the third letter with a SASE so patients can easily communicate why they are not responding the phone calls and/or letters.
5. Please note: Many patients may desire emails or text messages instead of a phone call or in addition to phone calls. Contact patients using their preferred method of communication. When an appointment is still unscheduled always follow up with a letter.
6. After 18 months of follow up calls, letters, emails and/or text messages without a response, this patient should now be considered inactive.
7. New patients are the lifeline of your dental practice but keeping the old is much easier and more cost effective than bringing in the new! "One is silver and the other is gold!" Effective communication and this Continuing CARE Plan will keep your schedule full!

The Continuing C.A.R.E. System is the best system you can use to maintain contact with your patients. It takes effective communication on behalf of your ***entire*** team to implement the four simple rules. When you begin this conversation and everyone on the team is in line with the philosophy of offering the best C.A.R.E., patients are most likely to follow along with this mindset and understanding – continuing care in your dental office.



Meet Debra Seidel-Bittke, RDH, BS

Graduating with Bachelor's Degree in Dental Hygiene from USC in Los Angeles, Debbie has worked in the dental field since 1976. She has worked as an assistant professor for the dental students practice management course and was also an assistant clinical assistant for the dental hygiene students at USC. In 2000, Ms. Seidel-Bittke founded Dental Practice Solutions and has helped many dental practices throughout the world to increase oral health and partner to increase their practice profits. In 2008, she wrote the accreditation for a new dental hygiene program in Portland, Oregon.

With her broad knowledge in the field of dentistry, she brings proven methodologies for success working with patients and in the areas of profitability for the dental practice. Debbie knows ***exactly what it takes to add six figures to your dental hygiene department, quickly, without working more days or seeing more patients.*** Call her to partner with your team for a day and you will see what a difference her knowledge will create for the success in your dental practice.

Debbie is passionate about educating dental professionals to communicate the link between oral health and our overall well-being. She believes that when patients understand the importance of this evidence-based science, they are more likely to schedule appointments and continue returning for their routine dental hygiene appointments. The end result is happy patients who refer their friends and family **PLUS added profits** to your dental practice!

Are you looking for a speaker for your study club or dental association? Do you need to provide team training? Debbie is available for speaking at dental meetings and your next team meeting.

Dental Practice Solutions, combined with their expert consultants, has over 50 years of hands-on experience. Our coaches/consultants have partnered with thousands of dental practices throughout the world to reach a higher level of success by adding value to their patient services and profits to their practices. We work together with you and your team to find a working budget and analyze how many days you really need to work to accomplish your realistic goals. By monitoring your weekly production, goals, and accounts receivable, we make certain you are on the right path to success. You patients will have improved oral health while your dental practice experiences improved financial health as well. This is a win-win!

Would you like to know more about Continuing Care?

Grab our eBook NOW! – available for immediate use and download.

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