



# If your staff don't highly value your services, then treatment plans won't be sold

By Julie Parker

**Y**our team deals with the issue of the price of dentistry daily. You develop systems to manage this aspect of treating patients, such as payment plans, issuing verbal and written quotations and structuring a portion of your discussions with patients around the topic.

It is appropriate to contemplate how your team members navigate the issue of the cost of dental treatment and the impact on dental patients.

All consumers weigh up the benefits and drawbacks of making any purchase: What are the benefits the purchase will deliver to us against the drawbacks of the amount of money that will be removed from our bank account? The larger the perceived benefit and/or the lower the perceived price makes these decisions easier for the consumer.

The price range of dental services is higher than many purchases, so deeper consideration is often thought to be required by patients.

Here's a crucial insight for your consideration: When one or more of your team members feel that:

- The patient cannot afford the treatment;
- The price of the treatment is too high; or
- They would not personally spend that amount on their own dental health...

Then the message of "too expensive" can be subconsciously delivered to patients.

The issue of "price" versus "value" is one that I encourage all dental teams to discuss openly. Team members know the price of every service down to the last cent but often do not understand and appreciate the value delivered to their patients by those treatments.

The price of any service your practice provides is relevant only up to the point of payment. After your patient has paid for

their treatment, the value they experience is over the days and years to come. And this is what your team members need to understand and appreciate to effectively communicate with your patients during treatment plan discussions.

If you handle this issue well, it can make a wonderful positive difference to the energy within your practice and the feelings that your patients experience with every interaction.

After your patients have paid for their treatment, the value they experience will be enjoyed over the days and years to come. And this is what your team members need to understand and appreciate to effectively communicate with your patients during treatment plan discussions and to assist them to make excellent decisions. Therefore, gaining a deeper understanding of what is important to each patient is crucial.

Your patients don't want a filling or a cleaning or an implant. What they do want is what the filling, the cleaning or the implant DOES FOR THEM. The VALUE that you need to communicate to your patients is the OUTCOMES they experience after receiving your treatment.

There is a distinction between what are good outcomes for your dental team and what are good outcomes for your patient. For example, one of the good outcomes when saving a tooth for your team is maintaining bone height of the jaw bone. However, your patient does not care about this outcome because he or she has not studied dentistry and therefore cannot appreciate these benefits. What he or she does see as a valuable outcome is enjoying a youthful appearance for as long as possible by maintaining their facial structure.

To be able to speak in "patient outcome" terms, consider how the different services you offer:

- Help your patients look better.
- Help patient's mouths function better.
- Help your patient feel better.
- Help your patient have peace-of-mind.

These are the outcomes of dental treatment that are valuable and meaningful to your patients. These are the outcomes they *understand*.

Missing this crucial step in your treatment plan discussion with your patients is not only a disservice to you and your practice, but also denies your patients the information they need in order to make informed decisions about their oral care.

I urge you to work with your team to involve them in identifying the comprehensive list of patient outcomes for key treatments offered by your practice. This will have the following substantial and beneficial impact on the discussions conducted with your patients:

1. Team members will clearly understand the value each treatment can deliver;
2. The mindset of team members will be one based on the positive outcomes patients will experience rather than the price;
3. There will be consistency in the message the patients receive when speaking to the dentist, the nurse, the receptionist or other team member about their treatment options; and
4. There will be an important flip in the team's purpose, from "trying to get patients to accept expensive treatment" to "helping patients look, function and feel better".

## About the author

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