



VERBAL SKILLS AND NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

By Janet Steward

When we get rushed, it is often difficult to remember to slow down and focus on the patient so that they always feel like they are number 1 when they are in your practice. Focusing on some specific verbal skills and body language from time to time, helps to reinforce what we sometimes forget to do.

Hygiene Visit:

- Greeting the patient: walk right up to the patient in the reception room (never stand in the doorway); greet them by name with a smile and invite them to accompany you: *Fred, it's good to see you again, please come in.*
- Let the patient walk in front of you: *Fred, it will be the 2nd room on the right.*
- When the patient is seated, before you put the bib on and before you recline the chair, seat yourself facing the patient, eyeball to eyeball and review -> *Marta, help me with verbals here please*
- Before you place the bib, ask the patient: *Fred, may I take a look?* Place the bid and recline the chair and proceed with your examination.
- → *Marta, let's talk about some of the verbal skills you use while you're with the patient*
- When the Dr. comes in for the examination there are three things the hygienist needs to clearly specify:
 - Periodontal status of the patient
 - Recommended interval between hygiene appointments
 - Restorative concerns

Have the following ready prior to the Dr. entering the room:

- X-rays developed and mounted
- Completed periodontal charting
- Intraoral pictures (on all patients)
- Sit the patient up when the doctor enters the room. The doctor sits down facing the patient, maintain eye contact with the patient (don't be turned away looking at x-rays or perio chartings yet-the patient is your entire focus), the mask is removed: *Good morning Fred! It's good to see you today. Julie, how are things looking for Fred today?*
- *Doctor, Fred is doing a good job with his homecare. We still have a few 4mm pockets in the posterior areas so I have recommended that he stay on a 3 month interval to prevent any back sliding. Fred also is having sensitivity with that tooth on the lower right. I have a picture on the screen; there's a large silver filling on that tooth and we have discussed the possibility of a crown.*
- The doctor ask permission to perform the examination: *Fred, may I take a look?* The doctor then reclines the patient, replaces his mask and proceeds with the examination all the while talking about his findings to the patient and the hygienist.
- The hygienist should stay in the room during the examination to chart the Doctor's findings.



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- At the end of the examination, the doctor raises the patient back up, removes his/her mask and summarizes his/her findings and treatment recommendations. Ask open ended questions such as: *Fred, what questions do you have?*
 - Once all the patient's questions and concerns have been answered, the doctor leaves the room.
 - The hygienist should reaffirm that the patient has clearly understood and summarize the course of action. *Fred, did everything that Doctor said make sense to you? Great. Well here is what we're going to schedule you for: we need to make sure that you keep on the 3 month visit with me so we'll schedule that today and Doctor wants to do a crown on that tooth on the lower right – that will be a two visit appointment – one for about 1½ hours for the crown prep and another for about an hour two weeks after that to deliver the final crown. We'll have the ladies at the front desk schedule these appointments for you, okay?*
 - When bringing the patient up to the front desk, the hygienist will state the following:
 - What was done today
 - What needs to be scheduled next

Tracy, today we did the periodontal treatment for Fred. Doctor wants to be sure that he stays on a 3-month interval with me so please schedule his next visit in June. Doctor is also going to do a crown on tooth number 30 on the lower right so we're going to need two appointments for that. Fred, it was great seeing you today. Thanks for coming in. I look forward to seeing you again in June.