



# How to Make New Patients Raving Fans

You've gotten a new patient into your practice. Now how do you keep him or her there?

BY MISTY MCNEILL, DPM

*Practice Management Pearls is a regular feature that focuses on practice management issues presented by successful DPMs who are members of the American Academy of Podiatric Practice Management.*

*The AAPP has a forty-plus year history of providing its member podiatrists with practice management education and resources they need to practice efficiently and profitably, through personal mentoring and sharing of knowledge. To Contact AAPP visit [www.aappm.com](http://www.aappm.com).*

can do is get our patients better quickly, it is imperative to remember that they are consumers and have many choices in healthcare. Every practice has the opportunity to impress new patients and leave them wanting to refer in family and friends.

### Start Before the Visit

After the patient makes an appointment, follow up with an email. Include the new patient paperwork, financial and HIPAA policies, and any other rel-

of water and juice boxes, and snacks for kids (and the hungry adults!). Make sure this room sets the "vibe" you want patients to get about your practice. And make sure it is always ready for visitors.

### Run on Time

While we love our welcome area our goal is to minimize their time to the room. Respect your patients' time! The biggest compliment I get is that I run on time. And we all know time is out most valuable commodity. Our

## New patients come in and want to like you but at the same time they want to be wowed.

Everyone is always talking about how to get new patients into your office, but if you are going to have a successful thriving practice you will need those patients to return. Not only do you want that patient to come to you for every foot and ankle problem but you want them to refer all their family and friends. In short, you want to make them raving fans! So once you get a new patient into your office, what do you do next?

At our practice almost 50% of our new patients come from another patient referral; beyond that, 15% of our new patients refer a friend or family member within 2 weeks of their first visit. The numbers don't lie and we have realized that impressing our patients is by far the best (and easiest) marketing we can do.

New patients are a captive audience. I find that most of them come in and want to like you but at the same time they want to be wowed. While the single most important thing we

evant info on your practice so there are no surprises! It can also greatly diminish their wait time in the office if your staff has all your patients' information early.

We also get all the insurance information when the appointment is made. This allows you to check eligibility and benefits. Patients love it when you know what is (or isn't) covered. They feel that you are invested in them as a person and care about the financial investment they are putting into their health.

### Make Them Feel at Home

You never get a second chance to make a first impression. Your waiting room is the first thing they see. At our practice we call it the welcome area, for just this reason. We want it to feel like our home. This goes far beyond comfortable seats, but that's a huge plus. We also offer a coffee bar, a fridge full

goal is check in to treatment room in less than 10 minutes. No, it doesn't always happen, but we strive for it.

### Be on the Cutting Edge

In today's market patients are looking for the latest and greatest. It is imperative that you keep up. Digital X-rays, diagnostic ultrasound, EMR, tablets in the rooms—to us these seem like normal everyday things but to patients it shows them you care about providing the best available care. You not only need to offer it but you need to make sure patients know about new technologies and treatments. You can do this simply with new signage or packets for your patients. At our office we have a digital slideshow that changes monthly to make sure our patients are continually aware of all that we

*Continued on page 62*

# PRACTICE MANAGEMENT PEARLS

---

*Raving Fans* (from page 61)

offer. They notice and ask about the slides often.

### Everyone Loves a Gift

We give all new patients a welcome gift. It has a nice letter from the doctors, information about the practice, referral

\$10 per patient. Think of the value of a new patient or the 3 they could refer. Money well-spent, in my opinion.

### Follow-up

To wrap up the visit our doctors all hand-write a card to every new patient. If you do this immediately after seeing the patient you can in-

one. With statistics like this we should all be working smarter, not harder! So spend a little extra time making an impression on those new patients and your practice will thrive. **PM**

---

---

## You never get a second chance to make a first impression.

---

cards, social media review information, coupons for our in-office products and a most important quality gift. Make sure the gift is usefu—we currently give a glass water bottle to all adults. We also give different items based on the patient's age—if you want to see more kids and tweens, make sure your gift is something they will enjoy! It's not as expensive as you think. Our average is

clude a small personal touch, such as mentioning an upcoming vacation or the near-future event of getting their child off to college. This takes less than 15 minutes a day and is by far the one thing we get the most compliments on.

Most sources report that obtaining a new patient can cost as high as 10 times the cost of retaining a current



**Dr. Misty**, as known by many of her patients, resides in Elmhurst, IL with her husband, 2 young boys and dog Chloe. She completed her podiatric surgical residency at Loyola University Medical Center and is double board certified.

**Dr. McNeill** loves the outdoors and when not in the office can be found running on the Prairie Path or cheering on her favorite teams, the Chicago Cubs and Blackhawks. Of course her favorite athletes are her 2 boys and her husband whom she loves watching play hockey, soccer and lacrosse. Since she is an avid runner, Dr. McNeill specializes in the treatment of running and sports injuries and foot ailments. She prides herself in returning her athletes to the sports they love as quickly and as safely as possible.

---