



Every Patient Deserves Your First-Time Energy

Treat every patient as if they were your only patient.

BY NEIL BAUM, MD

What do you think is the most common question that patients ask employees? Is it, “How long until I see the doctor?” or “Where’s the bathroom?”

If you were asked those questions multiple times every day—at what point would you start to act frustrated with any patient who asked an employee that question? Here’s the point: The 50th or 500th patient asking you where the bathroom is doesn’t know they are the 50th or 500th person asking that same question. For them, it’s the patient’s first time asking, and your response

Everyone in the audience deserves my best effort and energy, as if each member of the audience were the first to see my performance.

should convey that it’s the first time you’ve heard that question.

I have performed magic at trade show exhibitor spaces. One of the vendors hired me for three days, during which time I performed ten 20-minute shows a day—that’s 30 shows!

After the final show, the vendor asked, “How is it that after doing all of those shows, you seem to be just as

fresh and enthusiastic at the last show as the first show?” I answered, “I think about each audience. Everyone in the audience deserves my best effort and energy, as if each member of the audience were the first to see my performance. If I came off as bored or tired, I’d be letting them down, not to mention disappointing the ven-

Continued on page 26

Energy (from page 25)

dor. So, even though I may have performed the same tricks and delivered the same lines supporting the vendor's product for every show, each audience—even the 30th audience deserved my very best effort and energy as if it was the first performance.

play, on the first night of a performance or the last show of their season(s), you will find that the energy level is the same. How do these performers generate the same enthusiasm eight days a week for three hours a show for hundreds of shows? I believe they envision each show as their first performance and want each audience to experience

need to know. If you have any questions, I will be in the room shortly to answer any additional questions you may have." I also record in the EMR record that the patient saw the video and that I answered all his questions. I know this isn't a perfect method of patient education, but it avoids me becoming stale after repeating the message multiple times.

This same method can also be applied to a podiatry practice. For example, if you find you are discussing orthotics multiple times a day, you might consider creating a 5-10-minute video of the advantages of orthotics and how orthotics will improve their foot support and align the foot and ankle, correcting deformities, and improving overall foot function. For medical-legal purposes, I would document in the patient's record that they have seen the video and that you have answered all their questions.

I have a message on the wall in the employee lounge where they enter each morning. The sign says, "You are going on stage. So go out there and light up the room." This is a reminder that the staff and the podiatrist have an opportunity to make each patient have a positive encounter with the practice. When we can do that, patients become raving fans and will tell their family and friends about their interactions with the staff and the podiatrist.

Bottom Line: The best restaurant servers, athletes, trade show magicians, Broadway actors, and even podiatrists and medical staff understand that repetition is their challenge, not the patient's problem. Podiatrists and employees must find ways to keep their responses and reactions fresh, be it the first or thousandth time. This mindset transforms an ordinary patient experience into something extraordinary. Every patient deserves your first-time energy. **PM**

Podiatrists and employees must find ways to keep their responses and reactions fresh, be it the first or thousandth time.

Look at a server at a restaurant who recites the daily specials for the 12th time each night. Do you want to hear them deliver the menu with enthusiasm or with the boredom of the 12th repetition? If the server wants a good tip and the owner wants repeat business, then the server must be excited and enthusiastic with the presentation of the menu.

Baseball legend Joe DiMaggio understood this principle. His story is a perfect example of this concept. A reporter interviewed DiMaggio and asked why he played so hard for every game? He replied, "Because there might have been somebody in the stands today who'd never seen me play before and might never see me again."

If you have been to a Broadway

that same excitement and enjoyment.

I usually perform vasectomies on Friday afternoon. I find it a challenge to tell patients about the procedure, the post-operative instructions, and the potential complications multiple times each Friday afternoon. That discussion takes approximately 15 minutes. To make my same message fresh after preparing several patients, I made a video of that same discussion and ask each patient to watch the video either before coming to the office for the procedure, or if they are in the office, they see the video just before the procedure. Each video ends with the following message, "I hope you have found this video helpful regarding your vasectomy and I will provide you with a handout that summarizes what you



Dr. Baum is Professor of Clinical Urology, Tulane Medical School, New Orleans, Louisiana, and author of *Medicine is a Practice: The Rules for Healthcare Marketing* (American Association for Physician Leadership, 2024); email: doctorwhiz@gmail.com.