

## *The Patient Satisfaction Survey – Start The Year Out Right !*



In 1920, nineteen years after the opening of the first Nordstrom store in Seattle, John Nordstrom hung a huge sign from the ceiling in the entry way of that original Nordstrom store. It simply said, “If we are treating you well, please tell others. If we are not, please tell us!” He wanted his customers’ opinion of the service, the product and the people who were delivering both.

We are in a similar business as John Nordstrom, though not a department store, we too are delivering a product and, hopefully, great service along with it. January, the beginning of the year, is a perfect time to ask our customers (patients) opinion about us. We do not need to hang a huge sign from the ceiling as our patients walk in the door, but we can have a Patient Satisfaction Survey, set out at the front desk area with a cup full of pens and we can utilize the same words that John Nordstrom posted up long ago. At the top of the Patient Survey write - “If we treat you well, please tell others and if we don’t, please come and tell us”.

Formulate about 25 questions regarding all aspects of your practice and allow your patients to evaluate the service they are receiving from you. Be sure to look at clinical areas, financial areas, communication, telephone, treatment explanation, billing and computer services and the overall “feel and service” of the office. Rather than having patients say YES or NO to a question, give them a range from 1 to 10, or 1 to 5, and ask them to circle the number responding closest to the grade they would give you for that question. Provide a box for the patients to put the completed survey in rather than asking them to hand them over to you. They will feel more “secure” if there is box with a slot at the top for dropping them into. It is costly to mail surveys and then provide self addressed stamped envelopes for the return, so hand them individually to each and every patient and parent who comes in the door beginning in January until you have gone through your complete appointment rotation cycle. This also gives a more personal touch to the survey, especially when you hand it to a mom and tell her that her opinion is very important to you. Then you sit down at a team meeting and review them all together. Separate the ones that are “straight A’s”. ***And you will get many of those!*** Pat yourselves on the back, smile for just a moment, and then move on. Those who rate you superior in all categories truly will make you feel good about your practice, however, those people do not help you to grow



and to improve. Your Raving Fan Patients love you no matter what – it is the less than glowing surveys that you will want to read and take to heart. Bill Gates, Mr. Microsoft Gazillionaire, tells us that our most unhappy customer is our greatest source of learning. **How True!** Look for remarks that will perhaps not feel so good to read, but will eventually assist you in making your practice more Nordstrom like and help you to be even better than you currently are. It is very important to ask for the signature of the patient/parent completing the survey so you know who that Raving Fan is. But more importantly, you want to know who is it who cannot ever find a parking space, who says that Susie at the desk is sometimes rude, who wishes she could get a more convenient appointment time, who does not appreciate being kept waiting 30 minutes every time she visits and who wanted a different financial arrangement but was afraid to ask. They will sign it for you if you kindly write at the bottom **Signature (Optional But Greatly Appreciated)**. Be sure to have some lines at the bottom for comments and suggestions. This can be your most valuable information in the entire survey. This paper is of course, not a copy of a poor copy, but is crisp and typo free and looks as good as your clinical ortho does!

I have seen in many office that the Patient Survey is done on deband day, at the conclusion for treatment. I see two concerns with this and therefore recommend that you do unfortunately too late to family to any concerns are now finished with will not write anything about you because this is and they just want to get grinning! A little biased, I



not do it then. 1) it is make corrections for this they might mention, as they treatment, and 2) most people other than great remarks THE happiest day of their life out the door and start would say!

Each year, start your new year out right and do this survey of your patients. It is also a good idea to put one inside your Walk Out Packet to your new patients so you can learn early on what concerns they might have – and then make a commitment as a team to make it better. The motto of your office can be, as my mom taught me in elementary school -

Good Better Best  
Never Let It Rest  
Until Your Good Is Better  
And Your Better's Best !