

Seven Ways to Build Strong Patient Relationships

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When patients agree to go under anesthesia, they're putting their lives in our hands. Strong patient-provider relationships help patients build trust in providers and in the care they are about to receive. This trust can reduce anxiety and lead to overall better patient experiences. Here are seven tips to help anesthesia providers build stronger relations with their patients:

1. Connect with each patient on a personal level

This may be your fifth surgery of the day and your tenth of the week, but it's the first surgery for this patient this day. Give each patient your full attention. Listen attentively. Make eye contact. Spend adequate time with them and communicate empathetically.

2. Maintain legible, complete documentation

Although it might not seem to the professional that it would matter, accurate, legible and complete documentation shows the patient that the provider is attentive to detail and cares enough to follow the patient's case closely.

3. Establish rules of behavior and conduct for office staff

Every person seen and heard has an effect on how patients and their families view the quality of their care. Politeness, sensitivity, attentiveness and professionalism by front and back office staff can matter as much as the quality of a patient's clinical care. Patients want to know they are being cared for by professionals who view them as individuals.

4. Be attentive and accessible

Return phone calls. Provide an easy way for patients to reach you and other providers. Communicate with patients and families constantly during unexpected wait times. Check in on patients regularly before and after surgery, and during hospitalization. These communication checkpoints help the patient understand that you care about them as a person and that you're available to help them get their needs met.

5. Prescribe medications appropriately

Prescribe only the medications you as a professional recommend for any given patient. Prescribing drugs outside the physician's specialty, prescribing drugs for non-patients and buckling to pressure from patients for specific medications that you as a provider are not comfortable with increases risk.

6. Obtain informed consent

Informed consent does not begin and end with a piece of paper. It is a discussion between the patient and the provider regarding the risks and benefits of a procedure, treatment, test or medication. Ensure each patient understands the procedure(s) they are about to go through and have them confirm through verbal and written consent.

7. Disclose, build relationships and compassionately address any complications.

Patients need to trust those assigned to their care. Despite the best of care and caution, there can be rare complications. Should one occur, stay away from jumping to conclusions or placing blame before all the facts are in. Showing sincere compassion and sharing information with the patient/family is, of course, appropriate. Follow protocol in determining what occurred and take a team approach with all care team members to determine what, if any, procedural changes are needed. Complications, though very rare, can happen. How we deal with them shows character.

Sources

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