

## HOW A SUPERIOR PATIENT EXPERIENCE DIFFERENTIATES YOUR PRACTICE

By Sean Li, MD, Premier Pain Centers

### IN TODAY'S MEDICAL ENVIRONMENT, THE NEED TO STAND OUT IS GREAT.

**A**s a pain management anesthesiologist, people often don't know what it is I do. The field of pain management is still in its infancy and as a newer specialty, is still experiencing many growing pains. The training credentials of physicians in the practice of medicine aren't always standardized and patient experiences with practitioners may vary as well.

Patients suffer when they're not offered the highest level of care. And poor practices, such as not giving patients your full attention during an appointment, can leave an even poorer impression for those patients. In my experience, listening to patients and helping patients improve their outcomes, can facilitate a superior patient experience and truly set your practice apart.

#### THE ROLE OF SATISFACTION

Patient satisfaction is clearly critical to improving patient outcomes. In our growing field, the results of your treatment represent the entire field in a sense: a bad experience can turn patients away from the field of pain management entirely. I've had patients tell me they didn't want an injection because it was terribly painful. I've had to talk them through doing it again properly and pain-free. I've had

to explain to them that if you know what you're doing, and if you're using the appropriate anesthetics, pain management doesn't have to hurt.

A satisfied patient creates good word of mouth for your practice. Your reputation in your community is important because it is a small world—if you're known as the physician who's always available, has a good bedside manner, will consider the full range of treatment options, and takes care of patients, it goes far. But a bad reputation goes even further— an angry referring physician or patient will share their impressions with many friends and associates.

#### IMPROVING SATISFACTION

Matching the right patient to the right physician will also improve your patient's satisfaction and their perception of patient-centered care.

Being a collaborative partner in the referral process ensures you can make the best match with colleagues you know are dependable, reliable, and willing to treat your patients and get good results. The better the match, the more satisfied all parties are.



## OTHER WAYS TO IMPROVE OUTCOMES - There are many other initiatives to adapt to improve patient outcomes within your practice. These include:



### STAYING UP TO DATE:

Pursue the latest knowledge and technology to make your practice stand out. The physicians who set themselves apart are the ones who pursue new information, literature and technologies when available, including trying products such as COOLIEF\*, a cooled radiofrequency pain-treatment technique that may serve as an alternative to steroid injections for certain patient types. Then share your newfound knowledge and techniques. This way you can tell patients, "This is something I offer now."



### COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY:

This is critical and starts much earlier than the actual patient-physician interaction. I've tried to instill in my practice, for example, that answering a phone call is the initial impression of our office. Make it easy for patients to get to your office by providing directions or a map. If you're running late for a patient, address it with an apology and an explanation. For example, "I'm sorry I'm late. I was held up at the hospital helping another patient." Providing a true explanation of the situation makes a difference with patient engagement.



### BEDSIDE MANNERS:

Positive bedside manners always boost a patient's impression. This can include being focused during the consultation, not speaking to your patient with one hand on the doorknob poised to exit, listening intently to patients and more.



### HIGHLIGHT POSITIVE EXPERIENCES:

Create good marketing for yourself by encouraging patients to leave a positive review of your practice if they had a good patient experience. If a patient is happy with a new technology you've used to relieve their pain, such as COOLIEF\*, a satisfactory review of the experience can further help set you apart. Focus on it being a positive space and avoid the negative.



### PROVIDE A RANGE OF SUPPORT:

In the end, sometimes patients come in and aren't treated as anticipated. But they can also walk away knowing you as a physician tried everything you possibly could. They might not get the exact result they wanted – sometimes those results just aren't attainable – but that patient can still leave your practice perhaps not being clinically helped but emotionally supported.

This too helps improve your patient's outcomes because you can give them much-needed advice and direct them to the right people. That emotional support and guidance still provides a positive outcome for their experience within your practice, even though they may not have been treated at all.

*Sean Li, MD, has a consulting/speaking/financial relationship with Avanos Medical, Inc.*

To find a COOLIEF\* representative in your area, please visit [avanospainmanagement.com](http://avanospainmanagement.com)

There are inherent risks in all medical devices. For more detail on indications, cautions, warnings and contraindications, [click here](#).

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