

Scripting for Appointment Scheduling

Receptionist: “Which provider do you regularly see?”

Patient: “Dr. Moore, but it really doesn’t matter to me.”

Receptionist: “It really is better for you to see the same provider as frequently as possible, so that he gets to know you better and can take better care of you. Dr. Moore is not in today, but I can schedule you tomorrow with him when he returns.”

Patient: “I would rather come in today.”

Receptionist: “That’s fine, you can see one of his partners today, and next time we will try to get you in with Dr. Moore.”

OR

Patient: “I would like to make an appointment with Dr. Moore.”

Receptionist: “When would you like to come in?”

Patient: “Tomorrow sometime.”

Receptionist: “Dr. Moore is not in tomorrow. He could see you at 3:00 pm today, or he will be back in on Thursday and I could schedule you then.”
(Patient gets to choose.)

OR

Patient: “I would like to make an appointment for next month with Dr. Moore for my physical.”

Receptionist: “We really try not to schedule out so far, since plans change, and it can be hard to keep an appointment that is scheduled so far in advance. Would you like to come in sooner, or would you like to call back within a few days of when you would like to be seen? We will have appointments available then.”
(If patient is insistent and the schedule is open, go ahead and schedule, but make a note for someone to confirm appointment the day before.)

OR

Receptionist: “Dr. Moore’s schedule is full today, and we have already worked in a few emergencies. Since you are requesting a routine physical, I will need to schedule you for another day with Dr. Moore. What day is best?”

Patient: “@#\$\$%^&*(+%\$!! You people first tell me something about a same day appointment and have asked me to call on the same day, and now that I do, you tell me that I can’t come in today! When are you going to get your @#\$\$%^&# act together??”

Receptionist: (Pleasant and smiling) “We are doing the best that we can. We have gotten so busy that we have had to schedule out a few days, but we are working hard to get back to the same day appointments. Remember when you used to call and it took a month to get in? If you really can’t wait, one of Dr. Moore’s partners can get you in today, but I know that Dr. Moore would really like to see you himself, since he knows all about you. He can see you at 8:00 am tomorrow, and you will be his first patient of the day.”

OR

Receptionist: “Dr. Moore’s schedule is full today, but you can see him tomorrow morning or one of his partners today.”

Patient: I want to see Dr. Moore, but I don’t know what I am doing tomorrow. I want to call back tomorrow.

Receptionist: “If that works better for you that is fine. Try to call as early in the day as you can, since the schedules fill up fast, and I can’t guarantee that you will get the time that you want.”

Remember

- Choosing a provider is the patient's choice—accommodate them whenever possible.
- Always confirm primary care provider and schedule with that provider whenever possible.
- Try not to schedule out any further than two weeks, if possible, since the no-show rate rises after that length of time.
- Anything that you are scheduling for another day, try to encourage the early morning appointments. If the patient insists on a later time, go ahead and schedule (patient's choice!).
- If the conversation is getting tense, get the point across to the patient that we want this appointment time to work for him/her so that he/she will be sure to make it.

Source: Shah A, Stadlander M. Building Better Care "Empanelment." 1st ed. Portland, OR; Multnomah County Health Department. December 2009.

Safety Net Medical Home Initiative

This is a product of the Safety Net Medical Home Initiative, which was supported by The Commonwealth Fund, a national, private foundation based in New York City that supports independent research on health care issues and makes grants to improve health care practice policy. The views presented here are those of the author and not necessarily those of The Commonwealth Fund, its directors, officers, or staff. The Initiative also received support from the Colorado Health Foundation, Jewish Healthcare Foundation, Northwest Health Foundation, The Boston Foundation, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation, Partners Community Benefit Fund, Blue Cross of Idaho, and the Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center. For more information about The Commonwealth Fund, refer to www.cmf.org.

The objective of the Safety Net Medical Home Initiative was to develop and demonstrate a replicable and sustainable implementation model to transform primary care safety net practices into patient-centered medical homes with benchmark performance in quality, efficiency, and patient experience. The Initiative was administered by Qualis Health and conducted in partnership with the MacColl Center for Health Care Innovation at the Group Health Research Institute. Five regions were selected for participation (Colorado, Idaho, Massachusetts, Oregon and Pittsburgh), representing 65 safety net practices across the U.S. For more information about the Safety Net Medical Home Initiative, refer to: www.safetynetmedicalhome.org.



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