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Practice Management Information for Implant Dentists

Solve the Wait Time Dilemma Doctors and Hospitals Face Today

The Chicago Transit Authority recently instituted BusTracker – an online Web site that allows you to learn via your smart phone or your computer when the next bus will arrive at the stop at which you are waiting. Similarly, airlines for years have given you the opportunity to receive an e-mail, phone call or text message letting you know about the status of a flight.

Now, patients of dentists have the same opportunity to find out whether they will actually be able to see their dentist at the scheduled appointment time.

Patients have long complained about the wait times at their doctors' offices. In fact, a Consumer Reports survey ranked patient wait times as the #1 complaint among patients. Almost a quarter of the 39,000 patients interviewed complained of waiting longer than 30 minutes to see their doctor. (Source: *Consumer Reports*, February 2007; pp 32-36. News release, Consumer Reports).

This isn't just about frustration. There is an economic cost to the time spent waiting to see a health care provider. Alan B. Krueger, an economics professor at Princeton, In "A Hidden Cost of Health Care: Patient Time," published February 9, 2009 in the New York Times Economix Blog, calculated that "Americans age 15 and older collectively spent 847 million hours waiting for medical services to be provided in 2007. Using the average hourly wage of \$17.43 per hour for production and nonsupervisory workers in 2007, the cost of this time exceeded \$14 BILLION.

A new product - MedWaitTime - provides a way for doctors and hospitals to inform their patients about the current wait time and reasons for the delay. Just like BusTracker or notifications from airlines about delayed flights, **informed waiting** reduces the stress on patients and can limit the amount of dissatisfaction experienced while waiting. This reduces congestion in the waiting room and reduces stress on healthcare staff.

Patients log onto www.medwaittime.com as much as two hours before the scheduled appointment. Wait time is given by color coded rating – green, yellow or red – just like a stop light. According to Chicago-area dentist, Dr. Zack Zaibak in an article that appeared in the Chicago Tribune on July 14, 2010, "If you show a patient, 'We respect your time,' it shows you care about their comfort level in more than one sense."