

COMMUNICATION

CHECKLIST #5

COMMUNICATION WITH LOW HEALTH LITERACY PATIENTS

The lay public often has limited knowledge and understanding of dental terminology. A patient’s ability to understand dental information may be compounded by stress, age, illness, and language or cultural barriers. Effective communication with patients may improve compliance with treatment regimens, enhance the informed consent process, and increase safe medication use. Dental office practices can improve the patient experience, and reduce potential liability exposure, by employing the following recommendations.

	YES	NO
1. Lay terminology is used whenever possible. Technical terms are defined with simple language. Patient education materials are written in plain language, avoiding the use of medical or dental jargon.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Verbal instructions are reinforced with visual aids and printed materials that are easy to read and include pictures, models, and illustrations. Consideration is given to the use of non-printed materials, such as videos and audio recordings, as indicated.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Assistance is offered to patients when completing new patient information or any other practice documents. This help is provided in a confidential way, in an area that is private and conducive to this type of information exchange. Patients are encouraged to contact us with any further questions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Interpreters are used, if indicated for patients who are not fluent in the English language.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Open ended questions are used at the end of the encounter rather than yes/no questions to further assess patient understanding. Instead of asking “Do you have any questions?” we say, “What questions do you have for me?”	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Dentists and staff are familiar with and utilize the principles of the “teach back method” when reviewing new medications or treatment plans with patients. First we teach the information, then ask patients to repeat it back in their own words.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Patients and family members may be embarrassed by, or unaware of, their healthcare literacy deficits. Our dentists use an empathetic approach to understanding patient health literacy and to enhance the dentist-patient relationship.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>