

## Patients are Also Customers



With all the upheaval in our regular operations in the clinic, managers and staff are finding themselves in a position of having a bit more “power” over their patients. Many clinics are requiring a face covering in order to be in the facility.

Whether or not you agree with the policy is not really important at this point. What I am finding from personal experience is that front desk other staff members are exerting their new-found authority over clinic patients in ways that come across as rude and even hateful.

Again, it is not important if staff or patients agree with the mask requirement. If this is the policy of the clinic owner(s) then it needs to be respected.

However, it is important at all times, not just during this COVID situation, to remember our patients are also our customers.

I have personally had reception and nursing staff shout at me in a threatening voice, advising me I must put on a mask or immediately leave the premises and never return. There weren’t any signs posted on the door or at reception either.

Our patients are our customers. It is difficult at times to remember this in a service industry. Advise them respectfully and, if possible, privately (not shouting across the room) of the requirement for a face mask if that is your policy. This is no different than any other clinic policy (pets in the clinic, no shoes or shirt, eating, smoking, etc.), in how you communicate with the patient/customer.

Fear is real. I don’t understand a fear of flying, but I know a few folks that are very afraid of getting on an airplane. Should they “not feel that way”? Who are we to discount their feelings? Feelings are not necessarily justified or right or wrong, they just ARE. So, we all need to respect others fears whether it’s a fear of the virus or of flying.

I respect medical professionals being on the front line of the pandemic and taking the risks they take to provide the care we all need. It is important to remember to respect your patient.

When staff is given the responsibility of advising patients/customers of any new or long-standing policy, a bit of training on how to speak to the patient is a really good idea. Soft voice. Personal communication. Understanding smile. Welcoming body language (no crossed arms or fists on hips). Patience with the patient!

There is a Proverb that states: “A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.” Try it. It works!

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