

# SOPHRONA SOLUTIONS



## Time's Wasting: Let's Get Started Driving Adoption

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The Sage Portal will soon go live at your practice and patients will have the opportunity to complete new register (NPR) on-line. The sooner they start using this functionality, the sooner you can start gathering information about their eyecare needs. Understand these needs and you begin to stanch a leak of unmet sales opportunities that walk out of your practice every day. It doesn't take many missed refractive surgery opportunities to quickly add up.

Harris Interactive reports that nearly 80% of patients are ready to use on-line tools for their healthcare tasks. But like anyone else confronting change, patients may require a little hand holding during the transition. Adoption rates greater than 50% for on-line new patient registration are achievable, but it does require effort and it will take several months and some tinkering with office policies and procedures to achieve the desired results. What follows is a demonstration of how to strategically place prompts, reminders and incentives to facilitate adoption of an on-line process.

First, step into your patient's shoes and walk literally and figuratively as he or she completes the task under study. This will show all of the required steps. Next, determine each point along the path where the patient might be persuaded to shift to the web based process. Lastly, strategically place prompts, reminders and/or incentives along the path. The intent is to create a consistent message: there is a more desirable, portal based option to complete the task.

Working through an example will illustrate these points. A woman has found your practice through the phone book and calls the office to make an eye care appointment. She's always booked her medical appointments by phone and completed registration in the office, arriving 30 minutes early but she isn't aware of a web based option. Let's walk through the process as she might experience it starting with the practice's yellow pages ad. In addition to the phone number, the ad should include the practice's web address and a notation to book appointments and complete registration on-line saving time. If she persists undaunted and calls the office, she should hear a prerecorded message: save time by going to [XYZ.com](#) to book appointments and complete new patient registration on-line. If she resists these prompts, she should hear the same message from the practice operator. In addition, the operator should respond to any questions about the on-line process with pre-scripted answers to frequently asked questions. The operator should request her e-mail address to send a link and invitation to register on-line. If she arrives for her

appointment without completing registration, she should get a reminder from the front desk that she could do this on-line. The paper registration forms should include the same message. All along the path to task completion, the patient has been exposed to prompts and reminders that are consistent in their message.

Some patients need more support before embracing the change to on-line services. Upon check-in and check-out, they should get scripted prompts from the office staff. Office signage or video loops should also be visible prompting their use of the web site in the future. Screen shots of the patient portal home page with the list of portal functions should also be available. Take advantage of any mailings to the patients. Billing statements and news letters should include the same material promoting on-line services. As patient adoption rises, these mailings will decline along with the costs.

Lastly, reward the efforts of your early adopters. These patients completing NPR are ready to be roomed and it goes without saying that their office experience should be expedited. If you make them wait the same as always, they may not bother the next time. The remaining late adopters may yet respond to an incentive to go on-line such as a coupon to the practice optical shop.

In summary, this piece has walked through appointment booking and registration step by step from the patient's point of view to illustrate where to position prompts and reminders to facilitate adoption of the on-line process. The message must be simple and consistent about how to complete it and why it is to the patient's advantage to change. The same principles apply for encouraging patient adoption of on-line bill paying, ordering contact lenses or booking appointments; follow the path and create the appropriate prompts to guide the patient.

Gathering information on patient's interests is the first step. Learn how to profitably use this information in the companion article, *Patient Portal Utilization Best Practices*.

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