

# SOPHRONA SOLUTIONS



## Visit Planning Made Possible with a Patient Portal

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Do you ever wonder if your patient's office time is optimally spent or if you could better manage that experience to more completely satisfy their needs? What if it was possible to learn what your patients wanted before they came to your office? By that I mean learning information that goes beyond the basic purpose for the clinic visit such as an annual eye exam or a glaucoma follow up. Suppose you could learn prior to the visit that your patient was interested in refractive surgery or dissatisfied with the appearance or functionality of their glasses or interested in a new type of contact lens, wouldn't you be able to put together a better plan for the way that patient spent time in the office than say sitting and waiting?

Well it is possible to gather this information prior to the patient's arrival. The tool that makes this possible is called the patient portal. The patient portal is a secure, internet based information gateway into your office and your electronic data systems. New patients can efficiently complete all of their registration demographics, insurance and clinical information at their convenience. Established patients can similarly update their information. In the process of providing this information, other life style questions can be asked as well. Are you satisfied with the appearance of your glasses? Have you considered LASIK surgery? Do you wish to try contacts? Patients given the opportunity to use a patient portal are doing this online and >90% find the process easy, convenient and preferable to filling out papers on a clipboard..... while they wait. It's only common sense to strive to understand your patient's eyecare needs. It becomes a business imperative when you have retail operations providing these goods and services.

It's not just learning this information, but learning it when there is an opportunity to better

manage the patient's time in the office. Learning that your patient is interested in prescription sunglasses at the end of the time in the office, after they have been dilated, greatly diminishes the information's potential value. There is a less ability for the office staff to react and no opportunity to plan. Often, the only options to act on wants and desires at this point is some type of follow up—a phone call, another visit, or the promise of some type of mailing. An opportunity may be lost to address the need while the patient was there, engaged in the issue and essentially a captive audience.

When you have the ability to better understand your patient's wants and needs, the concept of the visit plan as well as the pre visit plan begin to have relevance. The patient interested in refractive surgery could have a LASIK surgery FAQ sent in advance along with the heads up to the ophthalmologist and an introduction to the refractive surgery coordinator. The dissatisfied glasses wearer may likewise appreciate receiving some literature prior to his clinic visit on how high refractive index lens material may improve his appearance as well as some face time with the optical staff. The patient who doesn't wear sunglasses because they are inconvenient may benefit from learning about transition lenses prior to the appointment.

There are many other examples and they all can increase the patient's understanding of the options and potential solutions to their problems. The common denominator of all of these examples is to first learn what the patient wants and to learn this before the patient arrives at the office. The second step is to reach out to that patient prior to their visit. This may include some topic pertinent print or video material. The third step is a visit plan for when the patient is in the office for their appointment and lastly there is follow up with the patient.

This may all seem like common sense—understand your patient's wants and needs and then attempt to satisfy them. The rub comes from the means to accomplish this and for this the patient portal is a very effective tool that allows this critical understanding to occur prior to the patient's arrival which can make all the difference in the ability to visit plan.