

OHSU Employee Engagement with School of Dentistry Services

This project addresses low employee utilization of OHSU's School of Dentistry as a dental home, specifically the Faculty Dental Practice.

Background

The OHSU School of Dentistry (SoD) Faculty Dental Practice (FDP) is a multi-specialty practice staffed by greatly skilled and experienced dentists. The Faculty Dental Practice operates much like a private dental practice. The 15 faculty members are highly trained and offer a full range of dental services. The dentists who work in the FDP split their time between seeing patients in the FDP and a preceptor role, educating, and supervising the SoD dental students and residents. An analysis of the practice revealed organizational strengths and areas of improvement. This summary focuses on three critical areas for improvement: (1) an awareness campaign to increase knowledge and interest in the practice, (2) website optimization, and (3) reduced wait times.

Analysis

Google Trend Web Analysis

Our team conducted market research comparing OHSU's dental school's website information and layout to those of the University of Washington, a regional neighbor, and the University of Michigan, which boasts the top-rated dental program in the United States. Our team appreciated the information presented on OHSU's SOD and FDP's pages; however, the other universities were more skillful at driving page viewers toward scheduling with prominent links or sleek icons urging "schedule an appointment". We noticed that the OHSU website deters new patients, stating that the SOD was currently offering limited services (OHSU, 2022). Additionally, the OHSU dental website said that new patients were not being accepted for oral surgery.

Secret Shopper

To gather information from the practice directly, we made calls to the School of Dentistry Faculty Practice. After waiting on hold for about 5 minutes, we left a voicemail and the call was returned within an hour. The Patient Access Specialist (PAS) was knowledgeable about the services offered within the practice. She explained the difference between the FDP and the student practice, letting us know that the FDP operates much like any other practice in the area and that costs would be similar, not discounted. The PAS stated that for specialty work, a referral from an internal General Dentist would be needed and attempted to schedule an appointment.

Employee Survey

We distributed a Qualtrics survey to identify how and why employees have or have not elected to become SOD patients. The results indicate that the general OHSU employee population is unaware of the Faculty Dental Practice. Prospective patients frequently comment

that they do not want to establish care with a student, further indicating the confusion between Faculty, Resident, and Student clinics. Eighty-seven percent of survey respondents who consider the FDP their dental home would rate the practice with either 4 or 5 stars (out of 5), indicating a high satisfaction rating. We wanted to find out how frequently employees who were not already patients of the FDP saw marketing or advertising about the practice. Eighty percent of employees responded never, eighteen percent responded occasionally, and under two percent responded regularly.

Recommendations

The FDP should build a campaign to inform and sell the OHSU community on the FDP as a dental home for themselves and their family members. The desired outcome is to increase the practice's visibility, increase new patient count, and grow revenue. The SoD should track the number of new OHSU employee patient appointments scheduled each month. Obtaining baseline data before the marketing effort will allow the administration to analyze further what specific strategies work best. This campaign should be a joint effort between Administration, Faculty, Patient Access Representatives, and Marketing.

The SoD webpage is busy trying to communicate with many audiences. This lack of focus creates more confusion than clarity. An updated design would increase traffic, improve search ratings, and reduce phone calls. An experienced designer can translate the data into an easy-to-navigate page attracting more visitors into prospects.

Long wait times can indicate waste in the system and manifest in poor patient satisfaction (Boi, 2019). A regular review of the total patient journey will inform the administration where they may improve the bottlenecks in the system. Specifically, measuring and analyzing phone wait times, first available appointments, and waiting room stats would address some of the frustration points mentioned by patients in the survey and interviews. Identifying and addressing the factors contributing to long wait times will immediately impact clinical operations.

Conclusion

Only a small percentage of the 12,000 plus OHSU employees have established care with the OHSU School of Dentistry Faculty Dental Practice. Low utilization points to a lack of awareness and understanding of the FDP and its offerings. Raising awareness of the practice, distinguishing the FDP from the Student practice, optimizing the webpage, and reducing wait times are key strategies for gaining new patients from the OHSU community.

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References

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