



Telephone Techniques

Possessing a great telephone manner and quality technique is a key ingredient when providing a high standard of customer service. When working in a medical centre an efficient and professional telephone technique reflects an efficient and professional practice. The person who answers the telephone is the caller's first point of contact with the practice. From this first point of contact with the practice, a caller for example a patient may decide 'I'd like to go to this practice' or 'They weren't helpful at all, I won't be attending that practice as a patient'.

There are a number of elements that should be factored into the development of a pleasant and professional telephone voice and technique including:

- Smiling when you answer calls;
- Speaking clearly;
- Varying your tone;
- Keeping your voice at an appropriate volume; and
- Pausing between phrases or sentences.

Most practices have policies and procedures for answering the telephone and it is of vital importance that you learn and adhere to the protocols in place. Some of the specific policies and procedures may be attending to a call within a certain number of rings, a standard greeting, screening doctor(s) calls and patients requesting test results over the phone.

When working in a medical practice, at times the telephone and your other work will be quiet. At other times you want ten pairs of hands for the telephone and the additional duties. Particularly from a patient's viewpoint, there is nothing more annoying and possibly dangerous than being told to hold the line when they telephone the practice seeking medical assistance. Therefore, the importance for a Medical Receptionist to ensure that it is okay with a patient to place them on hold cannot be stressed enough. In the general practice environment, emergencies are bound to occur and whatever the situation, putting callers on hold without asking first is unsafe.

What do all callers want? = What you can deliver:

- Dependable, efficient courteous and friendly service;
- Correct information;
- Someone who listens and shows interest;
- Someone with knowledge who can answer questions;
- Referral to the right person if necessary; and
- A positive attitude!

Note: This Fact Sheet is provided in conjunction with the GPA ONLINE *plus* Telephone Techniques Presentation.