

# Submitting Patient Information Online is Simple, Secure and Time Saving

Dr. Keith D. Rossein



Are new patients unhappy about coming early for their first appointment to fill out paperwork? After a patient fills out their personal, insurance and medical/dental history, are the forms often illegible? Does your staff spend countless hours scanning or retyping this information into your practice management software? Are you considering “going paperless” for your practice? If any of these answers are YES, you need to read on.

Some might say that over the last 15 years, dentistry has gone through a digital revolution with products such as digital x-rays, Cerec, intraoral cameras, digital diagnostics and practice management software.

And yet, with all that, dentistry as a profession has been slow, by comparison, to have greater involvement with the Internet and all the advantages of digital communication.

I'd liked to discuss one important phase of dental practice management that has previously missed an opportunity to keep up with technology and has been stuck in the mud in trying to move forward. I'm referring to the necessary process of

ascertaining information about new and existing patients that is extremely important to their treatment, health and their long-term relationship to the dental practice.

Most dental offices have some type of practice management software installed in their computers for record keeping, storing of patient information, appointment reminders and recall notices. Standardized codes and procedures have made it easier to submit insurance claims and get reimbursed quicker, especially with electronic submissions.

Yet, when a new patient comes for their first visit, we hand them a clip board and pen and a stack of forms that are

often 4<sup>th</sup> generation copies, and we ask them to provide us with extremely important information about themselves and their families. What’s wrong with this picture? The scenario only gets worse.

First, the patient is told to come a half hour early to complete the paperwork (they just love that). Patients stress out about other patients sitting nearby who may be looking over their shoulder, about where to put their insurance card/social security card or other documents that they removed from their pocket book or wallet and about where to get another pen when the first one stops writing (on the clip board propped up on their knees); in some case they have to keep one eye of their children.

And, this antiquated process is a burden to your office staff. It’s not uncommon for the patient to make several interrupting trips to the front desk to ask your office manager questions about the questions. When the often illegible forms are returned by the patient, your staff first goes to work. Some offices scan the forms and store them in the patient document center of their practice management software. Other practices retype all of the information into the electronic patient chart (only takes from 15-20 minutes).

The good news is that there is a better way. It’s a website called SubmitPatientForms.com [Fig. 1] that provides an inexpensive online service to dental practices so that their patients (unlimited number) can complete their paperwork before they come in for their first appointment.

Here’s how it works. A new patient calls the office. The office manager says, “We have a simple, secure and convenient way for you to fill out your paperwork online, so you do not have to arrive early for your first appointment. You may also print a copy for yourself before you submit the forms to our office. What is your email address? I will send you the link to get started. Please be sure to complete the information and submit it several days before your appointment.”

The office manager then logs onto your management account that was created when the dental office originally signed up [Fig. 2]. She clicks on “Refer a Patient.” When the next page is displayed, she types in the patient’s name and email address and clicks on “Submit.” [Fig. 3] This automatically sends a prepared email letter from the office to the patient. When the patient clicks on the enclosed link, it brings them to the HIPAA document for your office and they follow the online menu.

Patients can save their information as they type it. So, for example, they can start the forms on Monday evening, continue on Tuesday afternoon and finish up on Thursday. Before they submit, the patient can print out a copy of the forms for their own records.

Once the forms are submitted by the patient, the office gets an email notification; the office manager can then log onto the management account and clicks on “Registered Patient List.” A list of all patients that have submitted their forms will be displayed [fig. 4]. You will have three different formats in which to view or download the information – PDF, JPEG and/or Excel. If you want hard copies for the patient chart, open the PDF forms and print. If you want to store the forms in a patient document center of your practice management software, unzip the JPEG format [takes the place of scanning] and download those forms to your computer. If you need to type certain information such as name, address, phone, etc for a new patient into your practice management software, you may copy and paste from the Excel database to save time.

Having the forms completed before the patient arrives for their appointment has



Figure 1

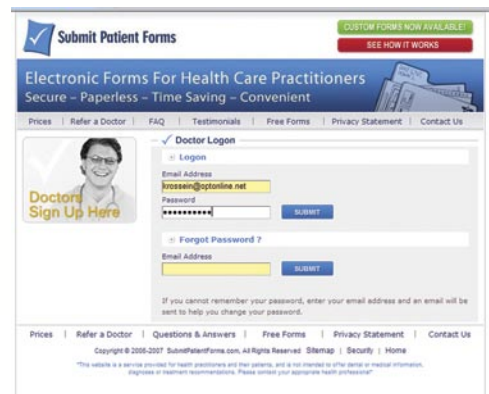


Figure 2

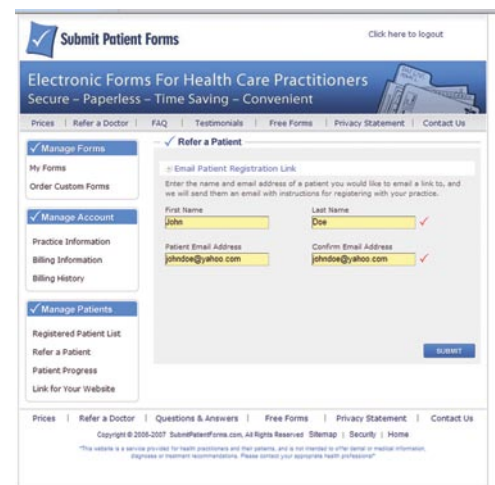


Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5

many advantages. The office can validate the patient's insurance coverage; potential medical complications, pre-medication requirements and/or past adverse reactions can be red flagged; time normally allocated to reviewing the entire medical/dental histories can be better spent getting to know the patient and double checking any concerns that were previously notice on the forms.

This service can be utilized with or without having your own practice website. During the sign-up process or at any later time, the practice can copy some Java Script from their management account that will allow their webmaster to embed a navigation button in the office website. This will provide a direct link to the appropriate page at SubmitPatientForms for your patients to start the process [Fig. 5].

This service should be used not only for new patients but for current patients so that all patient histories will be legible and standardized. In fact, Dr. Woody Oakes suggested that practices should contact their inactive patients, asking them to bring their histories up-to-date online, as an excellent way of reactivating these patients.

The "New Patient" form is the default form and will appear each time a patient is sent to fill out the paperwork. If your patient has already provided all the appropriate information by filling out the "New Patient" form at a previous time, but has some changes/additions to their information such as a change of phone number, address, insurance and/or has a new medication or medical complication, then the patient is instructed to choose the "Patient Update" from the drop down menu. This simplifies the process for the patient and allows the dentist and staff to quickly determine any significant changes without having to read all the past information and figure it out.

Some offices, because they are specialty practices or because they want to have specific questions with a specific layout, prefer not to use generic forms. So, for a one-time reasonable charge, your own custom forms can be converted into the SubmitPatientForms software and utilized with the same low monthly fee.

The SubmitPatientForms website is extremely secure [a comprehensive explanation can be read at their site]. Only the patient's dentist will have access to their personal data via a username and password. Once the patient's records have been downloaded by the dentist, he/she has the option of deleting the information. SubmitPatientForms periodically purges the patient records from the server, so they don't remain in the database indefinitely.

As a special promotion for the readers of *The Profitable Dentist*, SubmitPatientForms is offering a free month trial. During the sign up process you will be asked if you have any coupons. Type in EID18 and you will receive a free month trial and a discounted monthly fee of \$18.95, instead of \$24.95. The practice will still be asked to put in their credit card information, but there will be no charge until the second month. If before the 30 days are up and the practice wants out, they can call the toll free number or cancel by email, and there will be no charge to the credit card. It's a win-win situation and it would be hard to believe somebody wouldn't want to try it for free and see how well it actually does work.

*Dr. Keith Rossein is president of International Dental Consultants, a partner in WebDentalMarketing.com and SubmitPatientForms.com, the editor of Implant New & Views, is listed in the Seattle Study Clubs Speaker's Bureau and presents CE workshops on electrosurgery, narrow-body implants, stress management, care & maintenance of implants and Internet marketing. He can be reached at 888.385.1535 or krossein@optonline.net.*