5 Conversations Every Chiropractic Assistant Should Know

Let’s get something straight.

Chiropractors, I really don’t like to tell you this, but you are **NOT** the top factor of why new patients come to your clinic and stay…
YOUR CLINIC STAFF IS.

I know, I know. This is hard for some of you to adjust to, but it is true. Statistics show that patients choose a clinic more often than not on how they are approached, treated, and interacted with by the staff.

So, this presentation is directed at clinic staff…you are welcome to stay and pay attention, but this is mainly for your Chiropractic Clinic Staff.

Okay. Are they gone?

Let's get started…

Normally, with whom does the New Patient (NP) or Potential New Patient (PNP) come in contact?
RIGHT. The Chiropractic Assistant (CA) that answers the phone.
So, it is highly important the CA who answers the phone can complete the task of answering the PNP's questions and making the NP appointment fast and efficiently.
Easy enough right?
But we have all encountered "shoppers".

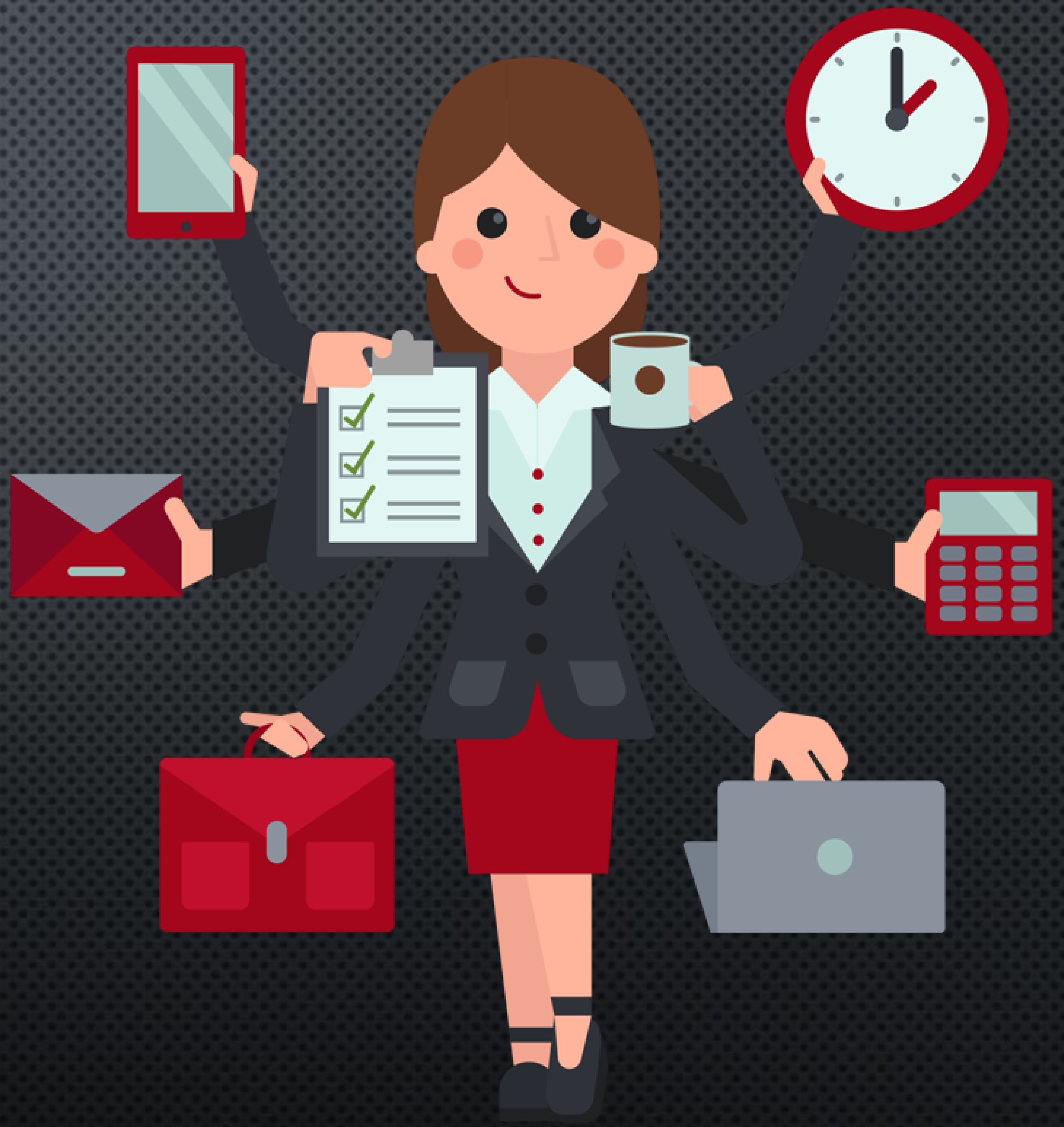
- How much is a visit?
- Will my insurance cover it?
- I just need a 'pop'.

After years of being in different types of Chiropractic clinics, I've been on the receiving end of hundreds of questions from PNPs, and it can bog you down if you don't know how to communicate effectively.

There are 5 communication areas you must be very well versed in.

1. The Phone
2. The Office Tour
3. Finances and Collections
4. Chiropractic Education
5. Patient Satisfaction

Let's get started.



The phone is ringing.

1. No need for a long greeting. “Dr. Smith’s clinic, this is Pam.” Pretty much all you need.
2. Let them speak, but YOU need to control the conversation with questions.

Let me expand. Here is a typical question and answer:

PNP: Hi, I need to make an appointment
CA: I can help you with that, when was your last appointment with Dr. Shelly.
(this determines if they are new or a recurring patient if they don’t give you a name or you have a new CA.)
PNP: I’ve never been there before.
CA: Do you prefer morning or afternoon appointments?
(This narrows down your time picking an appointment)
PNP: Well, I need to know how much this is going to cost before I come.
CA: Will we be filing any insurance for your visit?
(This narrows down the negative $$ talk over the phone)

The phone is ringing.

PNP: I don't have insurance, but I need to know how much money to bring.
CA: I understand. Regardless of if you are insured, underinsured, or private pay, you won't be out of pocket more than $127 for your first visit.
(DO NOT PAUSE)
So, let's find a good time for you to come and see the doctor. Did you say you prefer mornings or afternoons?
(See, you are controlling the conversation)

A CA should be able to answer questions, get the appointment, and move to the next phone call in less than 2 minutes.

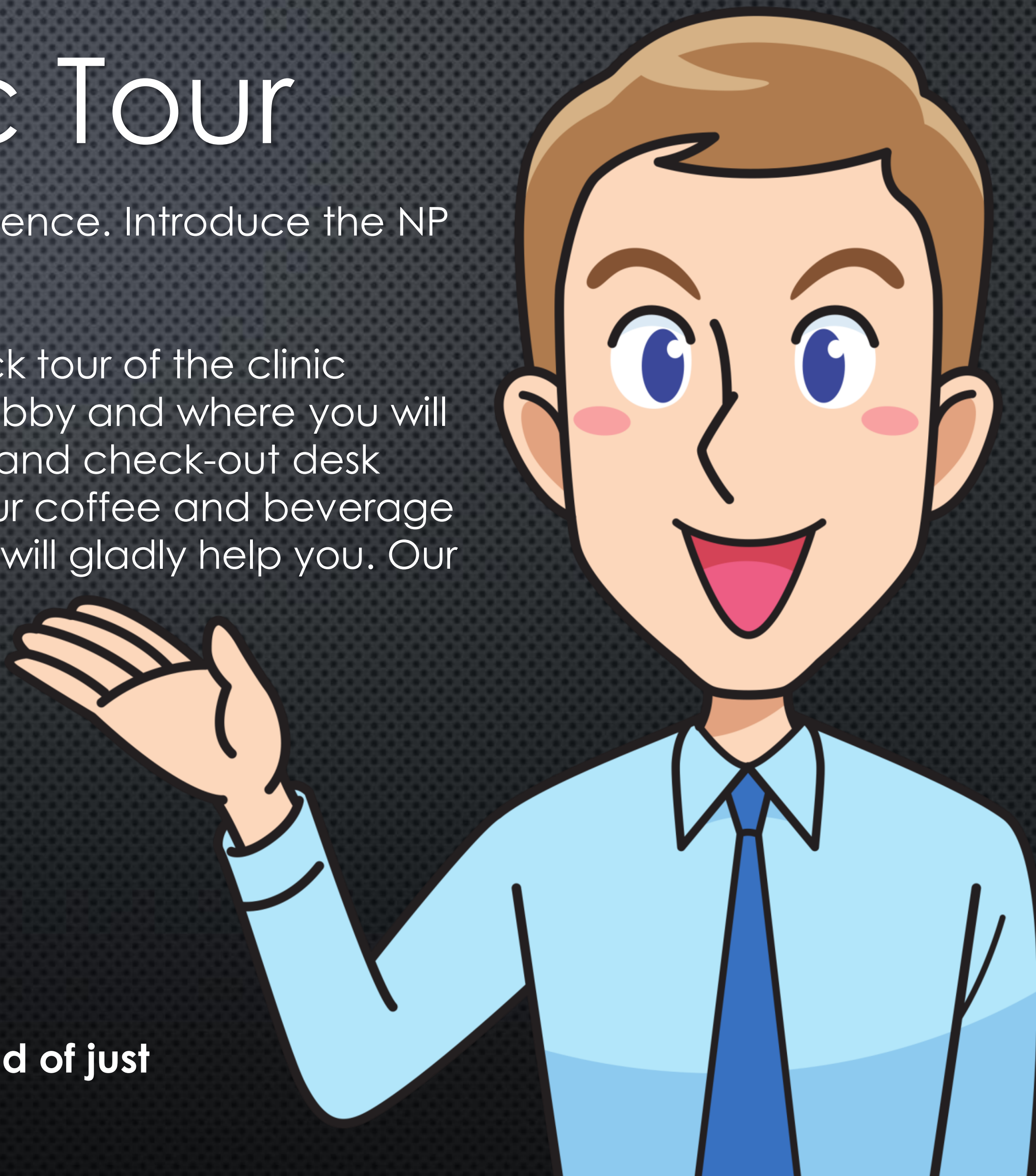
This is just a brief over-view of phone calls. We have an entire program JUST for answering the phone with a variety of situations, questions, and answers.

The Clinic Tour

This is a very important part of the New Patient experience. Introduce the NP to your clinic.

"Hi, James, I'm Sam and I'm going to give you a quick tour of the clinic before we get started. As you are aware, this is our lobby and where you will sign in for your future treatments. This is our check-In and check-out desk where you will meet Carla and Arthur. Over here is our coffee and beverage service, please help yourself or ask one of us and we will gladly help you. Our restrooms are right down this hall.

This is one of our physical therapy treatment rooms, as you can see, Dr. Smith has some state-of-the-art equipment in here. We have our adjusting area with a variety of ways to get you adjusted. Here is our laser-pain room, and our spinal decompression area. So, today, we are going to start in here, our exam and x-ray room."



You've shown the patient around the clinic instead of just taking them straight to Exam.

Doing the **Clinic Tour** introduces the NP to the variety of services you offer. In my clinic, we have a knee traction device and Spinal Decompression Chairs you can't get within 300 miles of our clinic. I always work that into the tour. Also, if you sell things like pillows, supplements, pain relief gels, etc., you can introduce the new patient to a brief over-view of what you have.

When I say something like, "This is our knee traction device" or I introduce them to our IV Therapy room, the NP has NO IDEA we do these services. In fact, one referred her mother for knee traction the next day, and a friend to IV Therapy. So give the tour and brag on your clinic, it is a great referral starter.

Finances and Collections

In most clinics the CA has a multi-tasking job. We have to be care-takers, nerve-calmers, hug-givers, and smile-makers. Often this makes it hard to be a money-collector. First, let's talk about using your WORDS.

Don't use:
PAY
MONEY
OWE

Use phrases like:
Your visit today will be…
It's $60 today…

Often, it is easier to talk about their next appointment BEFORE the money conversation. "Let's get your next appointment scheduled Mr. Jones. How's Monday at 2pm? Okay, today's visit is 60."

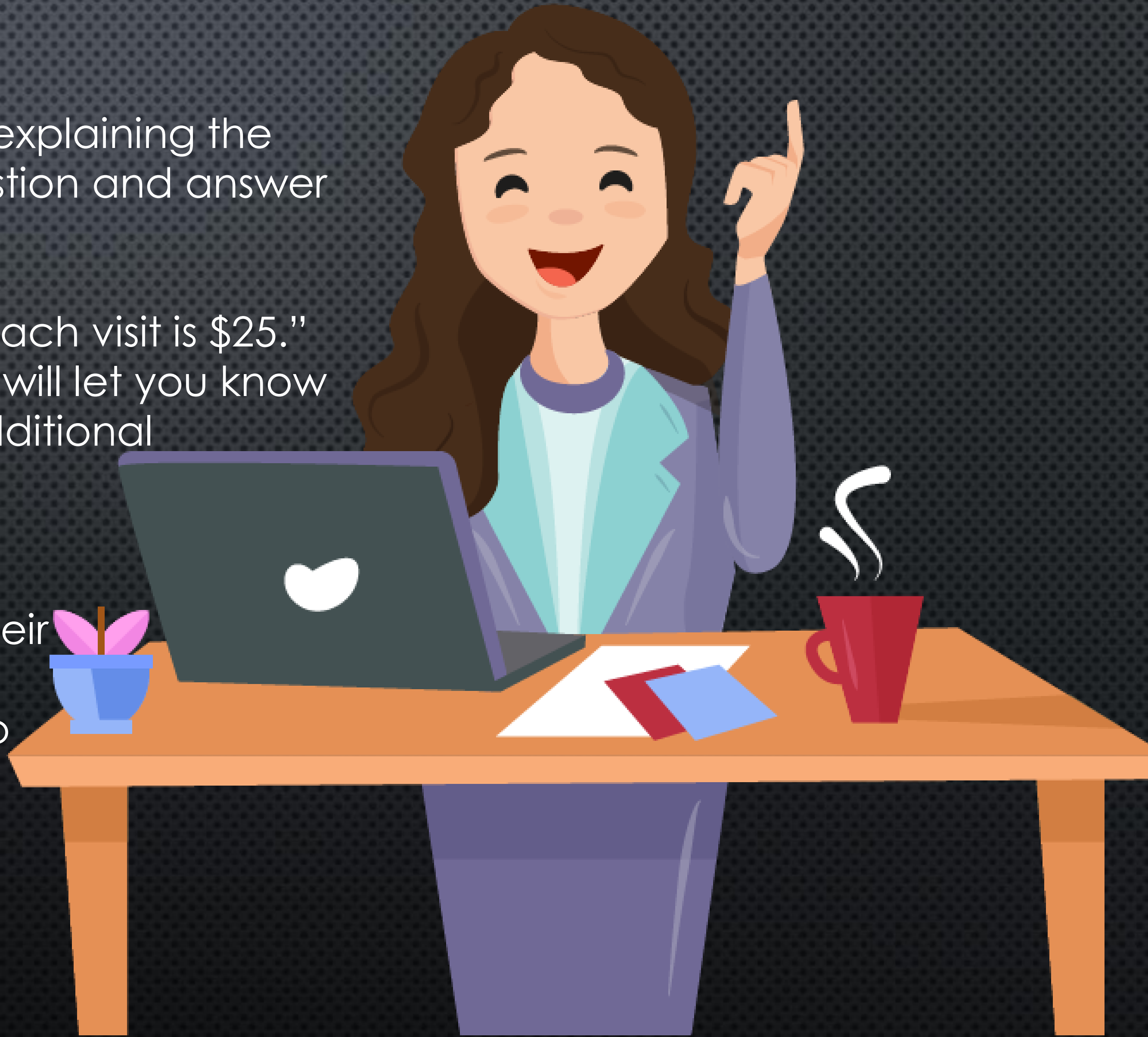
There isn't even a valid reason for the words, "how would you like to take care of that today?"

If you have a Private Pay practice, you are lucky. You can set a visit amount that is the same every time or have a membership-based practice. This makes collections easy, or at least less of an issue.

But, when dealing with insurance or Medicare, explaining the patient responsibility to a patient can be a question and answer dilemma for some.

Have clear boundaries up front. “Your co-pay each visit is $25.” or “Medicare covers only the adjustment, and I will let you know if anything the doctor does is going to be an additional responsibility if you would like me to.”

People value their time and their money.
Let them know you do also by understanding their financial responsibilities and being able to effectively communicate them to the patient so there is no misunderstandings.



Know Chiropractic, and your Chiropractor.

I’ve encountered some PNPs who know exactly what type of adjustment and Chiropractor they are looking for to treat them. I’ve also ghost-called some clinics and found that the staff had NO IDEA even where the doctor went to chiropractic school. Know what types of adjustment your doctor does, when and where he graduated, and some basic philosophy.

Interview your doctor so you are able to communicate this well to your patients.

Know some basics about chiropractic.
Know some history. Be intellectually curious about your career and bone up on your chiropractic knowledge.

You may know HOW to apply EMS, but do you know WHY you are doing it? Ask your doctor to give you the answers that patients might ask you.

Be A Patient Advocate

What is a Patient Advocate?

“A person who helps guide a patient through the healthcare system. This includes help going through the screening, diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up of a condition. A patient advocate helps patients communicate with their healthcare providers so they get the information they need to make decisions about their health care. Patient advocates may also help patients set up appointments for doctor visits and medical tests and get financial, legal, and social support. They may also work with insurance companies, employers, case managers, lawyers, and others who may have an effect on a patient’s healthcare needs.”

Wow, you are already a Patient Advocate!

Some clinics would call this person a “Case Manager”.

Be A Patient Advocate

What is important to the patient should be important to you as a case manager. Different CAs in the clinic can be different case managers to different patients. But as a multi-tasking CA, you can track visits, treatment schedules, finances, etc. and be your patients' go-to CA.

Know your patients concerns, hobbies, family situations, symptoms, occupations, etc.

I'm not saying get all up in their business…
I'm saying by knowing these facets of their lives, you can communicate more effectively with them and help them solve problems. Also, this relationship builds trust between the clinic and the patient.

Vitality Chiropractic Marketing & Management has a variety of Chiropractic Assistant programs that can assist you in expanding each of these communication areas. We have phone scripts that don't sound like scripts, but train you on how to answer questions and get the appointment! We have patient advocacy policies and protocols, FAQs from patients, and a wealth of information and training just for you.

We also do training calls, training meetings, ghost calls to identify problems, and specific one-on-one Chiropractic Assistant training.
We are here to help you with almost 3 decades of clinic experience.

If you have any questions on how **Vitality Chiropractic Marketing & Management** can help you, please visit our website or give us a call at 580-775-5857.