

Optometry Coding & Billing Alert

Patient Population Should Drive Reception Decor

Pediatric optometrists will have different waiting rooms than those seeing cataract patients.

Creating a comfortable reception area should always be on the minds of practice managers, but there's no template for the "perfect" reception area.

Why? A comfortable environment for pediatric patients would differ significantly from a comfortable environment for geriatric patients, for example.

Follow this advice to maximize comfort for patients in your practice's reception area.

Consider Spectrum of Patients the Practice Treats

When fitting the reception area to your patient population, knowing your customers is key, says **P.J. Cloud-Moulds**, owner of Turnaround Medical A/R Recovery in southern California. "Your specialty should reflect in your reception area," she explains.

Mixed population: If you have a mixed patient population (adults and children), provide seating and reading material for both age groups. "Have a corner for kids with books just for them," Cloud-Moulds advises. Toys for the tots would not be advisable, as that can get noisy and disturb your other patients, she continues.

Seeing younger patients? If you are in an area where you treat a lot of pediatric patients, or you see a lot of patients who present with their kids in tow, you might flip this advice: in other words, you might cater primarily to the pediatric patient, and then consider the comfort of the parents/adults.

High Medicare population: While it's good practice to have comfortable chairs with arms on them for all patient populations, they're absolutely vital to a practice that sees mostly elderly patients. "We see a large Medicare-age population, and our waiting room chairs have arms on them," Ciletti says.

Other ways to make geriatric patients more comfortable is to have the seating area close to the restroom and close to the exam area.

Empathy for your patient population is what matters most when making decor decisions in the reception area. "Practices need to understand the psycho-socio lives of their patients," says Horowitz.