Handling Unhappy Patients
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Scenario #1: The Lab’s Fault….or is It?
Emily: Hi Jane this is Emily with Eye Care Associates. How are you today?
Jane: "I am good. How about you?"
Emily: "I am fine thank you. I am calling to let you know the status on your glasses. Unfortunately, I have to tell you they have been delayed due to failing an inspection at the lab."
Jane: "Oh, really. It’s already been almost 2 weeks! How much longer is it going to be and why has it taken this long?"
Emily: Well, the glasses failed inspection more than once, which I was not informed of until now when I inquired on the job today. I have been told they have put a rush on the job so we are hoping if all other inspections pass, they should be here in 5 days or less. I do apologize for the inconvenience it may be causing you."
Jane: "Well, I do appreciate you calling but I am disappointed. I am leaving for vacation soon and I really wanted to wear my new glasses on my trip."
Emily: “I do understand. I would want mine too. When are you leaving?"
Jane: "We leave next week."
Emily: "I will do my best to stay on top of this and keep you up to date. I am confident we will have them before you leave and again, I do apologize."
Jane: "Okay…what else am I going to do but wait? Thank you for the call."
Emily: "Thank you, Jane and I will speak to you soon. Have a good day."

On a scale of 1-5 with 5 being excellent, how was this handled?
What could have been done/said differently?
What would be the proactive approach?
Scenario #2: Out of Control Children
Sara Truman had an eye exam earlier in the afternoon and had to rush off to pick up her children from school. Now she is back to purchase her eyewear with all 4 children in tow! Jacob, the 10 year old is the only one sitting quietly (and that is because he is playing a game on his mom’s phone). The seven year old twins and chasing each other and just knocked over the Ray Ban display. You turn around and see that the 4 year little girl is eating a sucker and has made sticky fingerprints all over the mirrors. Sara is pretty much ignoring the children as she looks at frames. There are 2 other patients in the optical who are getting quite irritated by the children. In fact, Mrs. Timberlake just said to you, “Those kids need to be disciplined! My kids certainly knew better than to act like that—what is wrong with parents today?” While you hope the Sara did not hear Mrs. Timberlake, you agree that the kids are causing a huge disruption in the optical dispensary.

Should you say something to the mother? If yes, what do you say?
How do you make sure the other 2 customers are given the attention they deserve?
What would be the proactive approach?
Scenario #3: The Discounting Doctor
You have been helping Ed McClain select a frame for the past 45 minutes. Ed is an engineer, a meticulous dresser and is very concerned about quality in a frame. You have narrowed the selection down to two frames that Ed likes equally well. “Ed, you don’t have one pair of shoes, and you shouldn’t have just one pair of eyewear either. If you purchase both pairs today, I can give you 50% off of the second pair of lenses”, you say. Ed replies, “Before my exam, I was looking at frames and I overheard the doctor tell a lady that he would give her 20% off of the frame and lenses and she just got one pair. Will I get 20% off the first pair also, and then 50% off of the second pair?” You say, “The lady that the doctor gave a discount to goes to his church. He usually gives everyone at his church a 20% discount.” To which Ed replies, “Well, I am sorry that I do not go to his church….maybe I should just go somewhere else to get my glasses.”

How do you respond to Ed?
How do you address this situation with the doctor?
What would be the proactive approach?
**Scenario #4: Pre-Appointed Patient Never Called**

Harry Fields is checking in at the front desk. His name is not on the schedule. “Mr. Fields, I don’t have you down for an appointment today.” He hands you an appointment card with today’s date on it and says, “This is the card that you gave me when I was here last year—it has been hanging on my refrigerator ever since so I wouldn’t forget.” You pull up Mr. Field’s appointment history in the computer and realize that this was a pre-appointment that was cancelled because he did not confirm. “Okay...I see what the problem is. We pre-appointed you last year and we sent you a postcard telling you to contact us to confirm that you were coming in.” Mr. Fields replies, “A postcard? I didn’t get a postcard from you. Besides, I never read postcards that I get in the mail—they are always junk mail! ”Well, it shows here that we also called you twice and you never called back to confirm that you were coming in, so we cancelled your appointment and gave the spot to another patient. I would be happy to reschedule you.” At this point, Mr. Fields is visibly frustrated. “I have been coming here for 15 year and I have never had to confirm before. I have an appointment card in my hand, I took off work to come here this morning and now you are telling me that you cancelled my appointment. Forget it. Tell Dr. Smith that he just lost a long-time patient.”

How do you respond?
What can be done at this point?
What would be the proactive approach?