



# THE ReCOREder

*Core Recovery Bureau Quarterly Newsletter*  
July, 2008 *Jeanne Martin, Editor*

*Editors Note: Our long awaited summer weather has finally begun! The long cold winter is forgotten and Cherry Festival is about to begin. Get outside and enjoy all the festivities! Life is short, play hard. As always, we welcome your comments and suggestions. Please email them to: [Support@corerecovery.biz](mailto:Support@corerecovery.biz)*

## Turn Patient Complaints into Opportunities

*Make it a positive experience*

All health care providers get complaints from patients about their charges or service from time to time. How you handle them can be the difference between a bigger problem and an opportunity for better community relations for your facility. Well-reported studies have shown that complainers will tell ten people about their unhappy experience with a vendor, while those who are satisfied will generally tell only five people.

Research sponsored by the White House Office of Consumer Affairs offers some interesting statistics. For every person who voices a complaint, there are likely to be many more who just don't say anything and continue to be upset. Some of those will have serious complaints.

The same research shows that complainers are more likely to do business with your organization again, even if they are dissatisfied. This is because those who complain are two to five times more loyal than those who say nothing! If their complaint is mishandled, you will be adding insult to injury and they probably won't pay the account.

However, if you satisfy the complainer, he or she will most likely pay and do business with you again. In fact, the customer's loyalty will likely increase.

### *Trending Calls*

"This may sound a bit general, but every patient complaint is an opportunity for at least looking at your process, if not always improving," says Y.Y. Mitchell, Liverpool, NY-based consultant. "For instance, if you have the staff give a brief synopsis of the patient calls throughout the day, you can trend the types of calls that are coming in to try to determine if something is missing from your procedures or if things are going exactly as you want them to go," he says.

### *A Position of Power*

Believe it or not, when you receive a complaint, it puts you in a power position. You can be in control rather than the person who is upset. You can take the opportunity to use that situation to your advantage.

First, make three assumptions:

1. The complaint may have merit;
2. The complainer's hostility is situational and not typical of him or her; and
3. The complainer, if handled properly, may forgive and forget the incident.

Some guidelines for responding to complaints, written or otherwise:

- Respond promptly. Avoiding or ignoring a complaint will either lose the client or make it worse. The next complaint may go over your head to your superior.
- Ask what specific charges are in question. What items, what charges?
- Ask specifically what the client wants to know about the charges. Be sure to convey a sense of caring and concern.
- Answer the client's specific questions as best you can. If a legal question arises, send the question to your legal counsel.
- Be sure to thank the client for alerting you to the problem.
- Be sure to recognize the complainer's right to his or her feelings.
- Offer an explanation if you can, but be sure to check with higher-ups if there is any question of liability, etc.
- Try to determine if the client's concern is just a delay tactic or a legitimate problem.
- Close on a positive note, if possible.

Patient surveys may be of some help in terms of discovering what problems may exist in your area, but it is a difference dynamic, Mitchell says. "People don't usually give the best feedback on those surveys. But when a patient complains, it usually means you have a person who cared enough to do something about it," he says.

## ***Master the Art of Listening***

*To be effective in collections, the ability to listen well is vital. Good collectors are able to listen to patients' problems, empathize and help them resolve the problems, if possible. If patients know you're listening, they are more likely to extend the same courtesy to you.*

*Listening also conveys a sense of caring. Learning to listen will help you build trust with patients.*

*Idea: One way to let patients know you are listening to them is to paraphrase what they say. This helps when you are talking on the telephone. After the patient completes a statement, say something like "Let me see if I have this correct. You are saying..." It's a good way to assure the patient you understand.*



**Is the customer  
always right?**

**Then there was the customer  
who received this notice:  
"Sorry, we cannot fill your order until  
your previous order is fully paid for."**

**He sent a reply:  
"Cancel my order.  
I can't wait that long."**

## ***Healthcare Costs Burden Even the Insured***

*A recent survey of nearly 26,500 people—most of whom are insured, employed and educated—revealed one in three families skipped medical care because of cost and one in four experienced serious problems paying for the care they needed.*

The survey was conducted by the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organization (AFL-CIO) and resulted in the largest opinion pool available on healthcare.

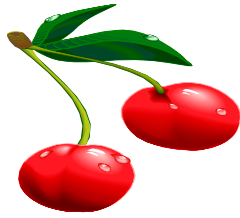
The survey results also revealed:

- More than half of insured respondents said their insurance does not cover the care they need at an affordable price.
- One-third of college graduates said they or their family skipped medical care because of cost.
- 46 percent of respondents spent \$1000 to \$5000 out of pocket on health care in the last year. Seventeen percent spent more than \$5000.
- 53 percent of Medicare recipients said their prescriptions are not covered or are unaffordable.
- 83 percent of respondents said their families “have just enough to get by” or are “falling behind.”
- 48 percent of respondents said they or a family member stayed in a job just to hold on to healthcare benefits.
- 95 percent of families said they are “somewhat” or “very concerned” about being able to afford health insurance in the future.

AFL-CIO and its community affiliate, Working America, launched the survey from January 14, 2008, to March 3, 2008. At least 7,500 respondents shared personal stories about their experience with America’s healthcare system. The survey, promoted online by more than 35 organizations, was open to anyone.

**A goal without a plan is just a wish.**

**--Antoine de Saint-Exupery**



## Summer Sun by Robert Louis Stevenson

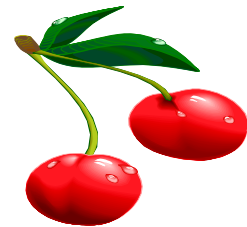
Great is the sun, and wide he goes  
Through empty heaven with repose;  
And in the blue and glowing days  
More thick than rain he showers his rays.

Though closer still the blinds we pull  
To keep the shady parlour cool,  
Yet he will find a chink or two  
To slip his golden fingers through.

The dusty attic spider-clad  
He, through the keyhole, maketh glad;  
And through the broken edge of tiles  
Into the laddered hay-loft smiles.

Meantime his golden face around  
He bares to all the garden ground,  
And sheds a warm and glittering look  
Among the ivy's inmost nook.

Above the hills, along the blue,  
Round the bright air with footing true,  
To please the child, to paint the rose,  
The gardener of the World, he goes.



### Source:

“Turn Patient Complaints into Opportunities”, *Health Care Collector*, January 2008.

“Healthcare Costs Burden Even the Insured”, *ACA International*, May 2008. (Our National Trade Organization.)

**Disclaimer:** This information is not presented to be used as legal or professional advice on specific facts or matters. Readers with specific questions should refer them to their own attorneys for guidance.