Dental Assistant Handoff to Doctor Protocol

A verbal handoff from the dental assistant to the doctor is crucial in streamlining your communication with the doctor and assuring the patient that you’ve listened to any concerns they may have regarding their dental health. Use the following guidelines to ensure a smooth patient handoff to the doctor.

**Before the Doctor enters the room**

* Wait to call the doctor in for treatment until the patient is fully prepared.
* Ensure the taken images are displayed on the monitor.
* If no new images were taken/needed, display existing images on the monitor.

**When the Doctor enters the room**

* Introduce the doctor to the patient.
  + For returning patients, you might say, “You remember Katerina.” or “Katerina is back to see us.” Also stated when the patient last visited your or another office.
  + For new patients, you might say, “This is Katerina’s first visit to our office.”
* Call the doctor’s attention to any special circumstances (e.g., serious medical conditions, medications, or patient demeanor). For example, you might say, “Katerina let me know she’s pretty nervous today, but I told her we’ll take great care of her.”
* Reiterate any concerns the patient mentioned during intake, and restate your response to the patient concern. For example, you might say “I let Katerina know we have been watching that for a bit and that you will probably be letting us know it’s time to take care of it.”
* Under normal circumstances, the entire handoff should take about 30 seconds. Here is an example of a full handoff script:
  + “Hi, Dr. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, you remember Katerina. She was last in the office 8 months ago and has a tooth that is bothering her on the upper left. The gum is swollen, and she has had some bleeding. I took an x-ray and let her know there may be a periodontal concern you’d want to talk about.”
* It is important to remember that this type of handoff to the doctor streamlines our office processes and makes our patient visits more efficient. When we are more efficient, our patients are happier.