

# THE EDITOR'S CORNER

## Get Off the Schneid

**A** “schneid” (pronounced schnīd) is slang for a losing streak. The term is commonly used today in sports, but you might be surprised to learn that its origins are in the card games skat and gin rummy, where a “schneider” signifies a player’s low point score. It comes from the German Jewish surname Schneider, which means “tailor” (a common occupation for Jews, who were historically excluded from most other trades). If you were “schneidered” in gin rummy, you were “cut” from contention in the game. Some have also suggested that it referred to a poorly played game, because tailors were associated with poverty. In sports, to be “on the schneid” means to be on a losing streak, while to get “off the schneid” means breaking the streak.

Some months at work, I feel like I’m in the throes of a schneid, unable to reach my desired number of new patients or collection goals. Let’s review a few of my favorite practice-management tips for getting our office off the schneid.

In my July 2022 JCO Editor’s Corner, “Keeping Pace,” I discussed my strategy for keeping the calendar full year-round. Essentially, I stack my four most challenging months—February, May, September, and December—with recall consultations ready to begin treatment. Following the initial consultation, if the patient is not quite ready to start, I schedule the second consultation specifically for the month I want to target. Still, there are times when this method is not enough to ensure that each clinical day will succeed financially.

In addition to securing a steady flow of consultations, I emphasize to my team the importance of starting the first consultation of the morning, which sets the tone for the rest of the day. Although many patients will request the first consultation time slot, typically at 8:30 a.m., it is crucial to re-

serve this appointment for an adolescent who is ready to begin treatment. For example, a 10-year-old boy in the mixed dentition and years away from peak mandibular growth would not be an ideal patient for the first consultation.

Another strategy is to convert a progress records appointment into a same-day consultation if the child appears ready to start treatment. I usually employ this technique if the number of scheduled consultations for the day is low, or if we need to catch up on our daily collection goal. During the records appointment, I ask the parents if they would like to go ahead and do their child’s consultation on that day; if they decline, I schedule the recall consultation during one of our four challenging months.

As a last resort, I will briefly adjust a consultation’s financial contract, depending on whether I need more new patients or higher collections. Suppose the monthly number of new starts is acceptable, but collections are low. In that case, I increase the pay-in-full discount and raise the minimum down payment to discourage new patients from selecting in-office financing. I might also run a promotion for patients in treatment to pay off their remaining balances at a discount. Both these strategies will increase monthly collections.

Down periods are unavoidable for an orthodontic office. When you find yourself in one, take a page from sports psychologists, who all agree that the best way for you to get off the schneid is to review your systems, remain upbeat, and avoid placing additional pressure on yourself. Implementing some of the strategies mentioned above may help end the schneid quickly. You don’t want to start carrying previous at-bats into the next one, so focus on the consultation in the chair. It takes only one win to change the momentum. NDK