



**Business of Medicine**  
Support for a Healthy Practice

# Starting A Practice

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# Starting A Practice

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# Starting A Practice

- **Introduction**

- New physicians may need to hire staff
- Most physicians will have to see 30-40 patients a day to make reasonable income
- New physicians are responsible for developing policies and procedures for their own practice
- Should try to incorporate the best practices that you witnessed during your residency

# Hiring the Right Staff

- A patient's first interaction with the practice will be with the staff, not the physician
- Rightly or wrongly, the first impression of the clinic will be based on this interaction
- Hiring people that reflect your values and are patient centered is essential

# Steps for Hiring the Right Staff

- Before hiring staff, you have to determine what are the needs of the office.
  - Who's doing the billing – you, the staff, or a 3<sup>rd</sup> party?
  - What are the important duties – patient scheduling, greeting patients, EMR user?
  - In an existing practice, can the workload be distributed among existing staff?
  - Is there a need for experienced staff?

# Steps for Hiring the Right Staff

- Develop key responsibilities and job descriptions
- Determine your budget and salary range
  - Too high salary – lowers physician income
  - Market value – should find capable staff
  - Too low – may have turnover
  - Ask similar sized practices what they pay their staff

# Steps for Hiring the Right Staff

- Post the position internally and externally
- Pick 3-5 of the best candidates
  - ensure experience matches responsibility
- Interview the candidates
  - Ask behavioral questions
  - Ask for references

# Steps for Hiring the Right Staff

- *Always, Always, Always* check references
- Offer position to best candidate
  - Include salary, benefits, start dates and working hours
- If offer is accepted, have Employee Contract drawn up and have employee sign it



# Steps for Hiring the Right Staff

- Provide orientation for the staff, this can include:
  - Employment Contract
  - Training of tasks by existing staff
  - Employee Manual

# Office Policies

- Office Policies

- Your mission statement and policies should inform:

- Employees on guidelines to follow
- Patients on services you offer
- Patients on services you do not offer; and
- Patients on realistic expectations

# Billing Policies

- **Billings**

- Outside of patient care, the most important aspect of your business
- The onus is on the physician, not the staff, to bill properly
- Incorrect billings can cause
  - missed billings = lost revenue or
  - audits

# Billing Policies

- **Billings**

- Need to develop a process to

- accurately bill MSI in a timely manner
- reconcile MSI payments against billings and correct any errors
- bill and collect uninsured services
- bill for no shows

# Policy on Scheduling Appointments

- Initiate guidelines and follow them. They could include:
  - Appointment time – standard intervals or range based on complexity
  - How many services you will provide at one visit
  - Have patients with complex problems request more time at the booking

# Policy on Scheduling Appointments

- Have open spots during the day for emergencies or to catch up
- Have patients prepared to offer a comprehensive history of concern
- Identify patients that could have complex care or tend to have longer appointments (talkers) and book appropriately, i.e. last appointment of day

# Policy on Telephone Procedures

- Develop clear and concise telephone guidelines
  - Ensure staff are pleasant and understanding
    - Patients could have anxiety and concern about their health
  - Ensure sensitive conversations are not heard by other patients
  - Personal information can only be given to the patient or their parents if under aged

# Policy on Telephone Procedures

- Voice mail can be an important tool and help to automate the incoming calls to:
  - appropriate staff – front office staff, nurse, etc
  - advise patients of frequently requested information (hours, address, flu clinics, etc.)
  - when the patient can expect a phone call back



# Ways to Educate Patients on Policies

- Discussing policies with patients directly
- Patient information pamphlet
- Posters in the office
- Website or Social Networks (i.e., Facebook or Twitter)

# Key Metrics to Measure Success

- Tracking metrics can help achieve success
  - Revenue per visit
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> next available appointment
  - No show %
  - # of visits per month/year
  - Breakeven point (total expenses / revenue per visit)

# Office Efficiencies

- Tools/practices that help with efficiencies
  - Electronic Medical Records (EMRs)
  - Voice dictation (Dragon)
  - Templates for common referral letters, 3<sup>rd</sup> party (insurance) letters, etc.
  - Limiting staff's time on phone
    - On-line booking tools
    - Mass phone messages for cancellation

# Expense Savings

- Bundle telephone, internet, fax, long distance and cell phones (Bell Aliant, Eastlink)
  - Group of 4 physicians can pay \$700 a month
- Use payroll services (ADP, Meridian)
  - Physician can spend more time seeing patients
  - Using accounting firms or bookkeeping can be more expensive

# Expense Savings

- Buy medical supplies with other practices in the area
  - Bulk purchases lowers costs
  - Be careful not to order too much - spoilage
- Use “Discount Programs” at office stationary stores (Staples, Grand & Toy)
  - Usually 10% discount
  - They deliver to the practice

# Expense Savings

- If additional staff resources are required
  - Hire part time employees for the busiest time first and expand the role, if needed, at a later time
- If office space is available
  - Look for part time physicians or other health care providers to rent the space
  - Look for physicians to use your office in after hours

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