

FIRST CHOICE HEALTH

PHYSICIAN ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

DEDICATED TO EXCELLENCE

Practice Management Strategies

Customer Service Will Keep Your Practice Competitive

In any business, it's less expensive to keep current customers than to attract new ones, and in today's managed care environment this is especially true for physicians. When you develop a network of satisfied customers you give yourself a competitive advantage in retaining existing patients and in attracting new ones.

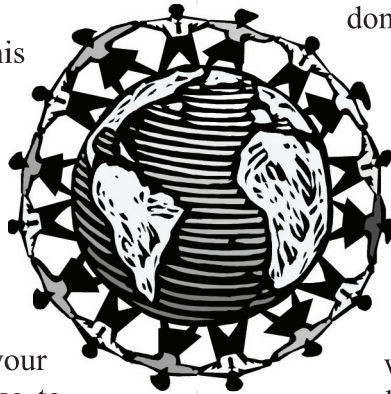
Successful practices understand this concept and work hard to accommodate the needs of each patient. This includes providing a cheerful greeting, knowing each individual's medical care needs, providing reassurance and listening to what each person has on their mind. With this level of attentiveness you can be certain that others will learn of your exceptional customer service and choose to become your patient.

According to Michael Cafferky, author of *Patients Build Your Practice: Word of Mouth Marketing for Healthcare Practitioners*, a patient is most likely to tell other people about your practice within 14 days of a visit. He goes on to say that a patient's perception of your practice will depend upon three factors: Can they trust you? Are you good at what you say you will do? Will you care about them?

Keep in mind that you also have external customers – ones who may never walk through your office door. Do you know where your referrals are coming from? Ask your patients (for the purpose of saying “thank you”) and have your staff keep a list of referral resources. You might find that pharmacists, specialists and other colleagues send people to you. Community agencies, emergency room personnel, the police, equipment

suppliers and community leaders are also referral sources. All of these individuals and businesses have a large sphere of influence and frequently account for new referrals. It's important to recognize them as key contacts and to let them know that you appreciate their confidence and trust in you.

Employees are your ambassadors to the world, and they promote your practice to a wide range of friends, colleagues and new patients. In addition, they truly are the ones delivering the level of customer service you envision. Compliment your people to let them know you recognize special effort or work well done.



Successful practices achieve a balance of consistency and flexibility, delivering personalized care and first-class attention. It takes determination, effort and a great team to achieve this balance, but when customer service is a top priority, reception areas are filled with people who tell others what a great and caring practice they rely on. ■

You're Reading the Newsletter –Thanks!

Some issues of our Newsletter really seem to garner the interest of our readers. We consistently receive comments regarding our content but never at the level of response we received from our last issue.

The articles on *Practice Violence Prevention* and *Compassion Fatigue* generated numerous premission requests for reprinting from various local and national associations and other organizations.

We're also pleased to say that, over the next few months, the PAP will be a presenter at several Medical Staff Meetings on the topic of Compassion Fatigue and the concept of Physician Assistance Programs.

If you have comments, suggestions for content or would like to be a guest contributor to the Newsletter, please contact Tom Maschhoff at 800-777-4114.

**A Series: Managing the Stress
of Modern Living**

The Healthy Advantages of Reaching Goals

David Burn, MS, Licensed Mental Health Counselor
PAP Clinical & Operations Manager

Whether it's about tracking your referral sources, completing CME hours, or developing the knack for delegating responsibilities, taking action on important goals is an underutilized asset in the war on stress in contemporary life. An example of the ultimate benefit of accomplishing a goal comes from the common experience of being up against a deadline. For most people, when push comes to shove, the required task is dealt with and completed – what needs to be done gets done. Universally, this leads to feelings of relief, reduced stress and an increased sense of well being.

Pursuing Goals is a Healthy Habit: Rather than allowing time pressure and deadlines to drain your energy, establish a plan of action for completing a task or accomplishing the goal. Take positive action. By achieving a goal or taking a step forward you counteract the negative effects of stress and reduce tension. Increased personal or professional feelings of accomplishment are self-defense against stress.

Be Flexible and Positive: The modern lifestyle places multiple demands on your time, energy and attention. Enhance forward motion by adding flexibility to your thinking, actions and daily routine. Rather than giving up on a task or goal when you're pulled in a different direction, let go of "all or none" thinking. Be flexible on purpose. A positive, adaptable attitude keeps stress in check and increases your effectiveness.

Save Time, Get Started: Instead of putting things off and getting stuck in the avoidance rut, take action on the tasks that lead to achieving your goal. Getting started is the most important part. Invest 15 minutes doing a task instead of an hour justifying reasons for putting it off. Getting things done during your most energy efficient hours allows you to plan effectively for what you'll accomplish the next day (instead of fretting about what you still need to do). Getting things accomplished during the day allows you to let go of worries, relax, and rest more completely at night

– a winning formula for being at your best physically and mentally.

Learn From Your Successes: Break free from the negative trend of defining yourself through past limitations and failures. Assess your capabilities in the light of success. Even the most complicated projects or goals can be broken into smaller, manageable tasks. Successful experiences, like goals, can be small, medium and large. In a demanding world, few things are more powerful and reassuring than self-trust and confidence in your ability to resolve the issues at hand. Truly, nothing succeeds like success.

Use Your Response Ability: Remember that responsibility is your willingness to consistently respond to the goals, tasks, needs, and opportunities that present themselves during the day. With few exceptions, most of us can lighten the pressures and stress we experience by making decisions and taking action in the here and now. That's a good example of using your ability to respond and everyone eventually makes the decision - as the saying goes - to "use it or lose it."

Contact the PAP: The Physician Assistance Program offers you expertise and a wealth of professional resources for identifying, setting and achieving goals – *at work, at home, in rest or at play*. The PAP can help you develop new ways to thrive and survive in the midst of challenging circumstances and stressful times. Accomplishing the goal of contacting the PAP is easy. You can call us 24 hours per day, 7 days per week at (800) 777-1323 or connect with us online at www.1stchoicedoc.com. ■



1-800-777-1323

Confront Compassion Fatigue by Delegating

In the last issue of our Newsletter we included an article on Compassion Fatigue. In addition to asking for additional information on the topic, many physicians completed the Compassion Fatigue Awareness Tool on the PAP website: www.1stchoicedoc.com.

One way to deal with Compassion Fatigue is to delegate daily and routine tasks to responsible others. Most physicians realize they are skilled entrepreneurs but often lack interest in overseeing the “daily grind” of practice management.

Start by asking yourself, “What am I doing that does not require my expertise and could be done effectively by someone else?” The hallmark of a good manager is effective delegation. Delegation is when you as a physician give responsibility and authority to subordinates to complete a task. A well trained clinical assistant can record patient histories and symptoms. Your staff members also play an important role in patient education, calling in prescriptions and refills, and handling routine clinical phone calls.

Some doctors resist giving authority to others in the office - particularly in dealing with patients. While the physician needs to maintain the decision-maker role in all areas of medical care and patient management, trusted and skilled office colleagues can be invaluable. The bottom line is that you cannot continue to be the CEO, Human Resource Specialist, Accountant, and Strategic Planner when the ultimate goal is the effective practice of medicine.

Here are some tips for getting started taking care of yourself and minimizing your Compassion Fatigue risk:

1. Decide what to delegate:

What daily decisions and tasks would you like to give to someone else? Ask yourself: “What am I doing that does not require my clinical skills or time?”

2. Select the right person:

Consider the skills and capabilities of your staff members and assign the task to the most



appropriate person. Make use of the full capabilities of your key staff members.

3. Specify your preferred results:

Give information on what, why, when, who and where. You might leave the “how” to your staff member. Write this information down as a progress road map.

4. Delegate responsibility and authority:

Assign the task, not the method to accomplish it. Let your staff member complete the task in the manner they choose, as long as the results are to your specifications. Give staff members strong input as to the completion date of the project.

5. Ask for Updates

Meet regularly with the staff member for project updates or ask for brief status reports covering what was done last week, plans for the coming week and any potential issues or concerns. ▪

“Stress is when you wake up screaming, and then realize that you haven’t fallen asleep yet.” – Unknown



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Fall Newsletter

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- Delegating

CONTACT US:

To request an appointment, ask a question, consult about an issue of concern or find out more about the resources & services available through the PAP:

Call us at 800-777-1323
(or via TDD at 800-777-4969)

Visit us on the Internet at:
www.1stchoicedoc.com

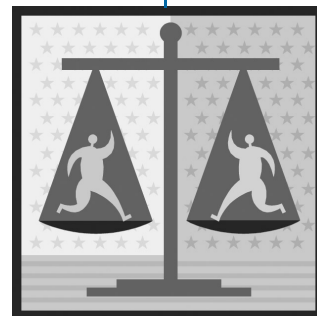
The First Choice Health Physician Assistance Program is dedicated to excellence in client care and customer service. We look forward to the opportunity to serve you - anytime a need arises.

QUALITY, CONVENIENCE, & RELIABILITY

This publication is designed to provide accurate and authoritative information in regard to the subject matter covered. If specific health or medical advice or assistance is desired, the services of a licensed healthcare professional should be sought. The information in the First Choice Health PAP Quarterly Newsletter is not meant to replace the advice or expertise of your physician or healthcare provider. If you are experiencing health problems or contemplating lifestyle changes such as diet or exercise, consult your healthcare provider ahead of time to ensure your well being.

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**Bringing Balance to
Work, Home, and Life**