FIRST CHOICE HEALTH

Physician Assistance Program

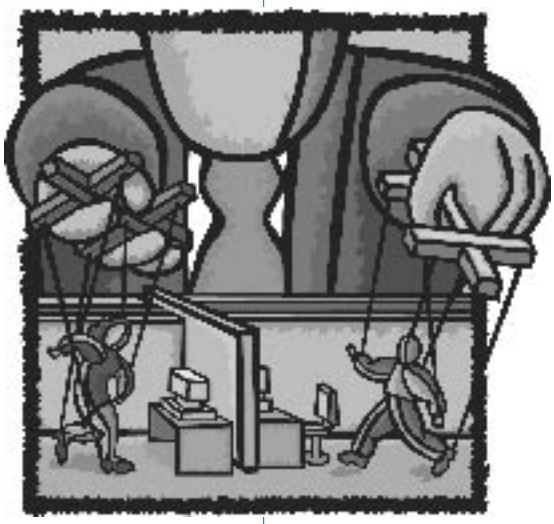
COMMITTED TO EXCELLENCE

Practice Management Strategies

The Physician As A Manager

As a physician, you are expected to act as a *manager* in a variety of settings. Perhaps in the hospital you lead a team or sit on several committees. In your private practice or clinic you are responsible for leadership and providing the right tools and direction for your staff to accomplish their duties.

When you are acting as a physician in your practice, you are bombarded with questions as you go from room to room and patient to patient. You dispense suggestions and advice frequently, and with all the time you spend in the hallway or at the nurse's station you may feel like you are providing adequate supervision. In fact you are making yourself available to your staff, but are you really taking the "pulse" of your people and what is going on in the workplace?



Here are a few helpful hints for you and your clinic manager and other practice supervisors to consider:

Circulate: Manage your practice by walking around (when you are not busy with a patient), and give people an opportunity to talk about their work.

Listen: Ask for feedback and suggestions. If there is a complaint, listen - and provide assurance and a plan to solve the problem.

Observe: Watch how people are doing their work, and look for accomplishments and examples of work well done. As a manager you should give three compliments for each negative comment about performance. We realize finding three positives can be a challenge with some individuals.

Provide Frequent Feedback: Give public recognition to your achievers, tell others about the great work they are doing or take a few minutes and write them a thank you note with a "cc to personnel file" at the bottom. This simple act has a very positive impact on a staff member. Come up with an award each quarter for the staff person who has gone beyond expectation in their work performance. Perhaps the "Golden Stethoscope Award" or a formal "Prescription For A Day Off Award".

Do Your Performance Reviews: For most managers, conducting performance reviews is an annual event they would rather avoid. For your staff it is the one time each year that they will know for sure how they are doing and if they are succeeding in their work.

The return on your investment in applying the above management skills in your practice will be significant and your staff will appreciate your suggestions, advice and observations.

One of the benefits of the Physician Assistance Program is having unlimited consultation available with our staff to discuss difficult workplace situations. Please call us at 1-800-777-4114.

NEED CME CREDIT? LOG ON

The use of the Internet by physicians for Continuing Medical Education has grown at a rate of over 100% in each of the past two years. There are now in excess of 200 sites offering CME's for free and for a fee. Approximately 6 percent of doctors are now actively using the Internet for CME training. The Internet offers a particular advantage to doctors practicing in remote locations or those who are looking for education on a very specific topic or procedure.

Free CME's are offered by most professional organizations and associations, although participation usually requires membership. In addition, drug manufacturers, hospitals and other entities are providing online education. The following list is representative and we do not necessarily endorse any of those listed.

- www.aafp.org (American Academy of Family Physicians)
- www.ama-assn.org (American Medical News)
- www.medscape.com (Medscape from WebMD)
- www.abohp.org (American Board of Hospital Physicians)
- www.healthstream.com (Healthstream offers a clearing house of live and on line CME's)
- www.cogenthealthcare.com (Cogent Healthcare funded by grants from various pharmaceutical companies)
- www.master.emedicine.com (e medicine-instant access to the minds of medicine)
- www.consensus.nih (National Institute of Health CME Online)

If you want to see a more extensive (at times overwhelming) list of free CME's, simply go to your search preferred engine and type in free CME. You will be amazed at what's available.

Continued From Our Last Issue:

HIPAA and Your Practice

With the April 2003 implementation nearly upon us, there are many questions about HIPAA.

Can a physician's office FAX patient medical information to another physician's office?
The Privacy Rule permits physicians to disclose protected health information to another health care provider for treatment purposes. This can be done by fax or by other means. Covered entities must have in place reasonable and appropriate administrative, technical, and physical safeguards to protect the privacy of protected health information that is disclosed using a fax machine.

Can physician offices use patient sign-in sheets or call out the names of patients in their waiting rooms?
Yes, covered entities such as physician offices may use patient sign-in sheets or call out patient names in waiting rooms, so long as the information disclosed is appropriately limited. The Privacy Rule explicitly permits certain "incidental disclosures" that occur as a by-product of an otherwise permitted disclosure. For example: the disclosure to other patients in a waiting room of the identity of the person whose name is called.

Is a physician required to have business associate contracts with technicians such as plumbers, electricians or photocopy machine repairmen who provide repair services in a physician's office?
No, plumbers, electricians and photocopy repair technicians do not require access to protected health information to perform their services for a physician's office, so they do not meet the definition of a business associate. Under the Privacy Rule, "business associates" are contractors or other non-workforce members hired to do the work of, or for, a covered entity that involves the use or disclosure of protected health information.

What should a covered entity that did not submit an extension request do now?
They should come into compliance as soon as possible, and should be prepared to submit a corrective action plan - in the event a complaint is filed against them.

HIPAA information was provided by HIPAA Solutions, which offers a full range of products and services to assist healthcare providers with HIPAA compliance. You can reach them at www.hipaarx.net

Multitasking Survival Guide

David Burn, MS, Licensed Mental Health Counselor

Multitasking – the ability to juggle many tasks at once - has become a routine activity for most physicians. Managing the responsibilities of life, family, work, and your medical practice can be overwhelming. Increasingly, keeping up with the pace of life by tackling several tasks at once has become a necessary survival skill for most doctors. As technology makes it possible to accomplish more and more in the course of the day, our ability to consistently focus on the details of our activities sometimes suffers.

Stretching our abilities to do more in a limited amount of time can be challenging (technology advances but there are still only 24 hours in a day). Multitasking is not always the most effective strategy for accomplishing all the things – in our personal and professional lives - that require time and attention.

Some behavioral healthcare professionals believe that – as a lifestyle - multitasking hinders our effectiveness. It's possible that starting, stopping, regrouping, and starting again – over and over – limits our sense of accomplishment and forward progress. It also takes a tremendous amount of energy.

Just as some people have difficulty making time to read a novel in the age of non-stop multimedia entertainment, determined multitaskers may find it difficult to relax, rest and enjoy down time, even when they're in the presence of friends, trusted peers, or family members. At night, thoughts about gearing up for things that need to be accomplished the next day - including your case load - can disrupt the process of getting a restful night's sleep.

Multitasking can be a useful short-term strategy for tackling and managing routine activities, especially when the tasks being juggled don't require unfailing accuracy. For projects or activities that require higher levels of attention and precision, however, the most effective, realistic, and user-friendly approach is to focus on one thing at a time – and seeing the activity through to completion.

Suggested strategies:

- Simplify – complete one task at a time when accuracy or detail is required.
- Keep a list of things to be done (writing things down frees your brain to focus on the task at hand).
- Learn to accurately estimate and reserve the time necessary to complete important personal and professional activities.
- Minimize unwanted distractions at work and home (close your e-mail program, shut your office door, etc.)
- When your undivided attention is required, delegate routine tasks to others.
- For maximum effectiveness, shift between periods of multitasking and extended blocks of time for focused activity.
- Take regular breaks and interact with others (walk, visit the doctors lounge, talk to a co-worker).
- Be committed to rest, relaxation and recharging your batteries when away from your practice or the hospital.
- Connect with your PAP to learn more about time management skills and other resources for responding to the unique demands of your life at home and at work.

No Wonder Buying A Car Can Cause Anxiety

There are now 1314 models of automobiles for sale in new-car dealer show rooms. There are 545 cars and 769 pickups, vans and SUV's. Add optional equipment, paint colors and interior choices, and there are literally millions of possible combinations. Americans will buy 16 million new vehicles this year, plus 45 million used vehicles.

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Spring Newsletter

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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.FirstChoiceDOC.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