

DEDICATED TO EXCELLENCE

**PRACTICE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES -  
Solving Small Problems Can Help In Long Term Strategic Planning**

**IN THIS ISSUE:**

- Solving Small Problems
- Eldercare: The Needs of Aging Loved Ones
- Gifts that Keep on Giving
- CEU Opportunities
- Identity Theft

**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](http://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**

Physicians should constantly be planning two to five years into the future regarding service provision, staffing, remodeling and the daily tasks of medical care delivery. By developing a sound long-range strategic plan you are taking pro-active steps to control your destiny and your practice.

Fortunately, the best sources for ideas and help in your planning are your patients and your staff. Asking your staff and patients what they think may seem like a simple solution and too cost effective to be of real value. After all, you would expect to spend thousands of dollars to have a consultant come in and survey these same individuals, gather the data and submit a formal review for you to consider. But think about it, these are the people who know you and your practice better than anyone else.

To solicit ideas and suggestions you can provide each patient with a brief survey asking about their experience and soliciting their suggestions about what would make their experience with your practice and in your care better. Provide this form with a return stamped envelope as they leave your practice. Typically, you can expect 15-25% of these surveys to be returned.

Provide the same or a similar form to your staff to complete (anonymously) and also provide them a stamped return envelope. Solicit insights and perspective from your staff members. Who better to underscore what you need to know in order to respond effectively to the emerging trends and daily realities of a medical practice?

The input you receive can provide important information about what your patients and staff feel is necessary and important. You can then approach strategic planning for the future with the confidence you are going in the right direction.

You may also find it helpful to contact the Physician Assistance Program and consult with one of our Account Executives about developing your questionnaire and conducting your survey. Contact the PAP at (800) 777-1323. We look forward to the opportunity to meet your needs and exceed your expectations for customer service.

**“Live in the active voice, rather than in the passive. Think more about what you make happen than what is happening to you.”**

– William DeWitt Hyde

**Need A Human Resource  
Form?**

Visit [www.1stchoicedoc.com](http://www.1stchoicedoc.com)

You will find a wide range of forms that will be helpful in your Practice Management. Please feel free to download and use at no cost to you as part of the PAP provided by your Medical Staff Office.

**Eldercare: The Needs Of Aging Loved Ones**

What should you do when a parent or aging loved one becomes more and more forgetful? He or she can't remember to take prescribed medication and frequently forgets to eat.

A stroke necessitated round-the-clock care. You know your loved one needs the skilled services of a nursing home or an assisted living facility, but how do you find a good one? Are these your only options?

The average American woman spends 18 years caring for aging parents. One out of three people in the workplace is providing 8 or more hours a week of care to a parent or aging loved one. The number of people 85 years of age and older is increasing three times faster than other age groups. Sooner or later most people face the challenge of being responsible for the care of an aging loved one.

First Choice PAP recognizes the importance of providing easy access to Adult/Elder Care consultation. One phone call can help physician families find the right resources, no matter where in the USA your parent or loved one resides. Call the PAP anytime to ask questions or to access our eldercare experts. One call truly can do it all: (800) 777-1323.

## The Gifts That Keep On Giving

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Manager of PAP Services

This article originally appeared in the Winter 2002 PAP Newsletter and as an Opinion/Editorial in the Eastside Journal. In response to positive feedback from readers, the PAP offers it again as a resource for managing the conflicts and demands of modern living.

With the holiday season in full swing and the arrival of 2005, the EAP wants to emphasize the importance of making & taking time for self-care – now and throughout the coming year. Self care is best described as purposefully attending to your physical, emotional, spiritual, interpersonal, and financial well being. A balanced lifestyle helps people minimize the negative forces of stress.

For most people, the holiday season requires us to shift into emotional and physical overdrive. We do this to embrace the traditions of the season and manage the increased demands on our time. What's frequently overlooked this time of year is the importance of rest and replenishing the energies of the self.

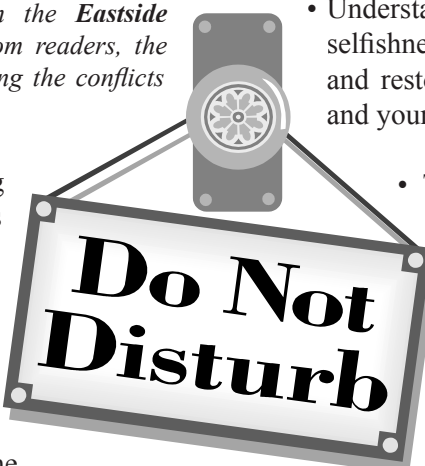
In addition to the obligations of work and family, the holiday season can be a time of conflicting feelings (from anticipation & happiness to disappointment & sadness). When you're constantly on the go, attempting to satisfy the spoken and unspoken needs and expectations of partners, children, parents, siblings, friends, and co-workers, the price is often a sense of physical and/or emotional depletion.

The rewards and joys of doing for others are important to our sense of health and connectedness. On the other hand, a steady diet of focusing on others - without enough time for self care – increases our vulnerability to feelings such as emptiness, anxiety, dissatisfaction, agitation, or sadness. This is especially true during and soon after the holiday season.

**FIRST CHOICE HEALTH**  
PHYSICIAN ASSISTANCE PROGRAM  
1-800-777-1323  
www.1stChoiceDoc.com

Most of us know better than to run a marathon without being physically fit and doing the appropriate training. Injuries from over-extending yourself in the annual dash to the finish line of the holiday season are less physical but no less harmful to your emotional health and general well being.

### Strategies for practicing self-care:



- Understand that self-care is not the same as selfishness. Self-care increases your effectiveness and restores your energy, to the benefit of others and yourself.

- Take frequent breaks to stretch and release the tension that collects in your mind & body. This is easy to do – even at work.

- Meditate or sit quietly - inhale slowly and deeply through your nostrils, and exhale slowly and fully - allowing troublesome thoughts to dissolve. As the writer Montaigne noted centuries ago: *The pleasantest things in the world are pleasant thoughts; and the great art of life is to have as many of them as possible.*

- If you have an exercise routine, maintain it to help manage and neutralize holiday stress. Take short walks to rekindle your energies.

- Attend to medical or health conditions for which you are being treated. The holiday season is not a time to drop your guard or minimize your needs.

- Avoid foods that cause you to feel bloated and tired. Minimize your intake of alcohol and caffeine (which can rob you of energy, disrupt your sleep, and increase stress on your body and mind).

- Realize that inconvenience is a common feature of the post-9/11 world. Be prepared to adjust your expectations and responses accordingly. Be flexible and realistic.

- Establish traditions that are meaningful to you. Consider letting go of activities or obligations that cause you to feel as if you're merely "going through the motions."

- Identify your priorities. Seek quality over quantity.

- Make use of the range of Physician Assistance Program services available to you. A few solution-focused visits can help you find ways to achieve greater balance, energy, optimism, and peace of mind.

## CEU Opportunities: Important Online Seminars for Medical Providers

From time to time the PAP becomes aware of online education and training materials that, in addition to being easy to access, are extremely valuable. First Choice Health PAP is pleased to report that the **Center for Substance Abuse Prevention** (through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services) offers many user-friendly trainings and educational fact sheets on their Internet site at <http://pathwayscourses.samhas.gov>.

The ever-expanding list of offerings includes interactive trainings and important information about increasingly visible problems faced by individuals and families. One of the very valuable trainings describes the hidden problem of elder abuse. Another very useful training discusses the dynamics of alcohol and its influence on violence against women. Both trainings – and many others offered by the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP) – are free of cost and practical as well as useful for physicians and medical practice staff members.

### Identity Theft: Information You Need to Know

Identity theft occurs when someone uses another individual's personal information without authority to do so (fraudulently). The financial, legal, credit, and privacy complications can be very serious for professionals, consumers and families. The PAP offers this information to help you protect your information and resources.

According to identity theft experts, name, date of birth, addresses, driver's license data, credit and debit card numbers, social security numbers and a variety of other ID numbers (including DEA numbers) can be used fraudulently. Identity theft happens every day. With more than 12 million cases estimated as of 2003, the increasing frequency is considered "epidemic."

Criminals gain access to online information and are known to steal mail and sift through trash for usable

information. Identity thieves use stolen information to open lines of credit, access bank accounts, attain prescription drugs and medical supplies, establish cellular phone service, and pay for travel and accommodations.

The resulting bills, penalties, taxes, potential legal fees, and time spent clearing your name and credit history can be staggering. Minimize your risk:

- Become selective when sharing information. At home and in your practice, know how the information you provide will be used and with whom it will be shared.
- Safeguard your Social Security Number. It is a primary source of identification, often directly tied to your financial, professional, medical, military, educational, and credit history.
- Never provide credit card information or personal data by telephone or online unless you initiated the transaction and have knowledge about the person or company with whom you are doing business.

**The Hidden Problem of Elder Abuse:** As CSAP points out, every year, millions of older people are at risk of physical, psychological, or other forms of abuse and neglect. Yet elder abuse remains a largely hidden problem. Most perpetrators are not strangers, but family members. This training will explore the dynamics and patterns identified as contributing directly to instances of abuse or neglect of aging people. It also offers tools for direct care providers to prevent harm and helps identify patients who are at risk.

**Alcohol and Violence Against Women:** Each year, women in the United States are the victims of 2.7 million violent crimes. In most cases the crimes are committed not by a stranger, but by someone the woman knows. As CSAP reports, researchers have found that up to one-half of men who commit acts of domestic violence also have substance abuse problems and that experiencing sexual assault doubles the risk of alcohol abuse among those who are victims. By appropriately challenging the assumptions about what you "already know," this training is important for physicians and other frontline medical professionals.

- Use the tools of technology to enhance security and privacy on the Internet. Upgrade your software at home and in your medical practice.
- Be vigilant. Check your credit report at least once per year (the 3 major credit reporting organizations are Equifax, Trans Union, and Experian). Recent legislation (applicable to many states) makes one credit report per year (from each of the above organizations) available to consumers at no cost. Call 877-322-8228 or visit [www.annualcreditreport.com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com) for more detail.
- Don't discard your mail or documents in the trash. Shred everything you don't retain.

If you need to report a suspected case of identity theft, contact the Office of the Attorney General in your state. For more information about how to protect against identity theft, contact the PAP at (800) 777-1323.

