

Productivity — Making Every Minute Count

IN THIS ISSUE OF PULSE, WE OUTLINE SIMPLE STRATEGIES THAT CAN HELP YOU BOOST AND MAINTAIN PRODUCTIVITY:

- MODIFY APPOINTMENT SCHEDULING TO START EACH DAY ON TIME
- ANTICIPATE PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES
- ESTABLISH PROTOCOLS TO STAY PREPARED AND READY
- CONTROL ENCOUNTERS TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATION WITH PATIENTS

Time is your most valuable asset. Turn every minute of physician time into productive and profitable time.

OPTIMIZE YOUR TIME

What patients seem to want, above all, is your time. Yet, there never seems to be enough of it. Optimizing your time—making every minute count—is the key to a successful practice. It can mean more productive time with patients and a more profitable bottom line.

There are a number of simple strategies that can help you boost and maintain productivity:

Start on time — Beginning with the first appointment of the day, set appointment slots 15 minutes before the time you expect to see patients in the exam room. This leaves time for patients to complete paperwork at the front desk or to ask questions related to billing or other concerns and

provides a brief window for patients who may arrive late. Starting on time will help you stay on time.

Check-in meeting — Begin every day with a 3- to 5-minute check-in meeting with your support team (medical assistants, nurses, and schedulers). Use the day's schedule as an agenda and quickly review every patient on the list. Discuss issues that may affect patient flow, such as the patient who is always late or the patient who typically needs more time than is allotted. Be sure to review any special preparations you will need, as well as any calls or visitors who are expected. Figure out when staff can fit in patients with acute requests. A brief check-in meeting in the morning helps you get control of the day, instead of letting the day control you.

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Be prepared — Establish protocols and procedures to help use time efficiently. Perform chart previews for all scheduled appointments one or two days in advance. In addition to the check-in meeting, the morning's preparation should include a start-of-the-day protocol to make sure the clinic facility is ready for business before the first patient arrives. Establish protocols about how staff should room patients based on the chief complaint, as well as how to set up rooms for procedures. Photographs or drawings of room set-ups can serve as models and help avoid confusion or mistakes.

Control the encounter — To make encounters with patients as productive as possible, start by introducing yourself to the patient and family members, when appropriate, with a handshake or gentle touch. Review labs, chief complaints, and other basic issues while you're with the patient. Your body language and small gestures can go a long way toward reassuring patients that you are focused on them during the time you are with them. To demonstrate your focus and attentiveness, conduct the exam while seated; make eye contact with the patient; and use his or her name when responding to questions. You may not be

able to spend extensive amounts of time with each patient, but the time you do spend should be as productive as possible for both of you.

There are so many disruptions that can affect efficiency and productivity: missing information, malfunctioning equipment, and delayed appointments and procedures to name just a few. Starting on time, preparing for the day, and controlling encounters so that you and your patients get the most out of your time can make your days more productive and your practice more profitable.



— Article by Elizabeth Woodcock, MBA, FACMPE, CPC, Atlanta, GA. Ms. Woodcock writes extensively for the Practice Management field.

PRACTICE SUCCESS TIP

PACIFIC COAST PAIN
MANAGEMENT CENTER,
LAGUNA HILLS, CA

"I pride myself on helping staff understand that the livelihood of the practice depends on teamwork."

Our staff works hard to make sure the doctors and physician assistant have everything they need to make



the most of their patient face-to-face time. We keep our physicians more productive by proper chart and exam room preparation. We have all but eliminated "no-show" for new patient appointments by requiring that new patient paperwork is completed, records are obtained, and insurance is verified prior to scheduling the initial visit.

— Sheri Yamamoto
Practice Manager
Pacific Coast Pain Management Center
Laguna Hills, California

