

Presented by the
American Society of
Cosmetic Dermatology
& Aesthetic Surgery

Implementing Standard Operating Procedures to Increase Efficiency in a Medical Practice

Helen M. Torok, MD; Heather L. Funk, MBA

Increasing efficiency in a medical practice directly affects the bottom line. This article will explain how consistency, productivity, and flexibility play a vital part in improving efficiency in a medical practice.

Consistency

Developing consistency through standard operating procedures within a medical practice not only improves efficiency, but also increases revenue and ensures results. Consistency is developed through having standardized human resource files and forms, job descriptions, and performance reviews. Establishing employee committees and monthly staff meetings also helps to achieve consistency through improved communication. Lastly, all of the marketing materials that represent a medical practice should have a consistent appearance. When a potential patient sees a marketing piece from a particular medical practice, they should immediately associate that piece with that medical practice upon first glance. Further explanations of ways to develop consistency in the areas previously mentioned are detailed in this article.

Human Resource Files and Forms

Keeping up-to-date human resource files and forms provides efficiency and a higher level of security for a medical practice. Due to the changing landscape of the legal arena and the workplace during the last 20 years, the number of lawsuits surrounding the workplace has increased dramatically. The outcome of a lawsuit often rests solely on a lack of documentation. By ensuring that a medical practice is in compliance and has the most up-to-date

human resource forms, the risks associated with a lack of documentation will be reduced.

Job Descriptions

A job description provides an accurate depiction of all the responsibilities and skills required to perform a specific job to ensure that the right candidate is hired for the position. When a job description accurately defines a position, it becomes a useful tool during the hiring process and orientation.¹ Job descriptions help employees feel more comfortable in their roles within a medical practice because they understand what is expected of them.

Performance Reviews

Performance reviews are a great opportunity to communicate with new hires or existing team members on how they are performing their job duties. In order to ensure that job performances are consistent with all team members, performance reviews should be completed every 6 months.

Employee Committees

Employee committees allow employees to have a voice in a medical practice and keep morale high. Employee committees should be responsible for nominating the Employee of the Month, improving morale, organizing employee functions, and addressing the concerns of a medical practice. Meeting on a biweekly basis is recommended for employee committees to make certain that all needs are being addressed and handled efficiently.

Monthly Staff Meetings

Monthly staff meetings are imperative for encouraging excellent communication within a medical practice and provide an opportunity to educate the entire staff on policy updates, new procedures, introduce new team members, and discuss marketing initiatives. Productive monthly staff meetings increase team morale and loyalty

Dr. Torok is Medical Director, Trillium Creek Dermatology and Aesthetic Center, Medina, Ohio, and Assistant Professor, Northeastern Ohio Universities College of Medicine, Rootstown, Ms. Funk is CEO, Trillium Creek Dermatology and Aesthetic Center.

Ms. Funk is co-owner of Practice Solutions, LLC.

within a medical practice. A lack of communication is often the source of problems; therefore, providing a forum for proactive communication helps eliminate problems at the source.

Marketing Materials

All marketing materials should have a consistent design layout in order to guarantee immediate association between the marketing piece and its specific medical practice. Medical practices' Web sites, newsletters, advertisements in local newspapers, and internal marketing materials should all have the same corporate logo, look, and overall feel. Consistent marketing helps develop brand recognition.

Productivity

In order to be efficient, an office must be productive; therefore, how does one determine whether a medical practice is profitable? Is the medical practice using all of its resources effectively, including physicians and medical support staff? Conducting a thorough, detailed analysis that identifies the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) of a medical practice will provide answers to these questions.

SWOT Analysis

A SWOT analysis is a 6-step analysis that precisely identifies what each medical provider is contributing to a medical practice, determines which marketing efforts are best for a medical practice, and illustrates the ways in which to attract more business.¹

At the completion of a SWOT analysis, the physician or medical director will have the tools needed for expanding their medical practice and will be able to make informed decisions about personnel and marketing investments. The results of a SWOT analysis can be very surprising. Long-held assumptions with regard to a medical practice may be turned upside-down. The SWOT analysis allows physicians to achieve their highest billing potential by identifying precisely what each medical provider is contributing to a medical practice, which allows the practice to put together a

multidimensional marketing plan that best suits the future growth of the medical practice.

Flexibility

The way in which a medical practice reacts to change, challenging situations, and threats to its livelihood determines its level of flexibility. Flexible medical practices are proactive in the midst of a challenge. As a result of conducting a SWOT analysis, a medical practice is aware of the threats that exist inside and outside of the medical practice and has created emergency plans for challenging situations, including surprise visits from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, developing compliance programs for the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, patient privacy, ensuring medical practice security, and diffusing challenging employee and patient situations.

Training and incorporating standard operating procedures for emergency situations are the 2 components for achieving a successful outcome in challenging situations. Training key team members on how to appropriately handle challenging situations pays big dividends when a confrontation arises. When key team members are trained on the standard operating procedures of how to handle a visit from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, a breach of patient privacy, or diffusing a difficult patient situation, they will confidently handle the tasks at hand.

Comment

The most efficient medical practices are consistent, productive, and flexible and have standard operating procedures in place, with all team members appropriately trained. Being consistent in every aspect of a medical practice increases revenue and ensures optimal results. By utilizing the information received from a SWOT analysis, medical practices can be productive, capitalize on their opportunities, and remain flexible and proactive in the midst of change and emergency situations.

Reference

1. Practice Solutions. <http://www.solutionsforpractices.com>. Accessed June 10, 2008. ■