
4. Building a Successful Practice

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Sample

Preparing for Your New Job

Learning Objective

- ◆ Identify tasks that will help you prepare for starting your new job.

Preparing for your new job will help your practice get off to a fast start.

- ☞ Use the **New Job Planner** at the end of this chapter to organize information and identify worthwhile tasks.
- ☞ If you're moving, you may also wish to use the **Physician's Relocation Planner** at the end of this chapter.

Before Employment Begins

Get in Touch

Get in touch with key contacts at your new practice:

- ▶ Your **physician chief**, the colleague who will help you get oriented.
- ▶ Your **nursing supervisor**, who will help you learn how the physicians and nursing staff work together.
- ▶ Your **administrative manager**, who will help you learn necessary administrative systems.

Complete Paperwork

Ask your physician chief or administrative manager about starting the **credentialing** process soon after you sign your employment agreement.

- ▶ State medical license
- ▶ Hospital medical staff privileges
- ▶ Managed care plan participation

Ask about obtaining **professional liability (malpractice) insurance** coverage.

Complete paperwork necessary to enroll in employee **benefits**, such as health insurance and retirement plan.

Order items you will need, such as your business cards, lab coats, pager, and cell phone.

Professional

Whether you are employed or self employed, you must obtain various licenses and identification numbers before you can start practicing. Be sure to allow at least three months for these to be processed and issued.

- ▶ A license to practice medicine in your state
- ▶ A US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) number
- ▶ Hospital admitting privileges
- ▶ Participating provider agreements with health insurance plans, Medicare, and Medicaid

Universal Credentialing DataSource

In an effort to reduce the paperwork associated with credentialing, the Council on Affordable Quality Healthcare (CAQH) gathers and stores detailed data from physicians and makes it available to authorized health plans and networks. Physicians submit a single application and may update their information online or via fax. Physicians may also use their application data for non-CAQH entities

For more information visit www.caqh.org

Meet Your Colleagues

If possible, visit your new practice to meet your new colleagues. Spend time with the physicians, nursing staff, and administrative staff. Visit the offices and hospitals in which you will be practicing. Meet key hospital personnel.

Set Up Your Appointment Schedule

Learn about your new practice's appointment scheduling system. If the system is flexible, you may wish to schedule longer appointments than

typical to give yourself time to learn without being rushed. As you become more efficient and gain speed, adjust your schedule to increase the number of patients you can see each day.

Outline Your Practice Development Plan

Ask your physician chief about the patients and cases you can expect, and how they are assigned. Outline marketing activities that will help you build your practice.

Building Your Practice

Learning objective

- ◆ Describe how to build a strong practice on the foundation of solid physician-patient relationships.

The Physician-Patient Relationship

The physician-patient relationship is the foundation of medicine, built on the bedrock of trust. In his unpublished monograph on the changing patient physician relationship¹, Andrew White, M.D. describes the seven fundamental elements of a good physician relationship, first described by Emanuel and Neveloff-Dubler.² Consider them carefully when building your practice.

Choice

- ▶ Patient and physician freely choose to be in relationship.
- ▶ Choice of diagnostic and treatment options
- ▶ Choice of hospitals and other facilities.

¹Andrew White, M.D., M.A., "Managed Care and the Changing Patient Physician Relationship", The Shenandoah Valley Family Practice Residency Program, Winchester, Virginia, December 1996.

²E. Emmanuel, M.D., Ph.D., N. Neveloff-Dubler, L.L.B., "Preserving the Physician-Patient Relationship in the Era of Managed Care", Journal of the American Medical Association, Vol. 273, No. 4, January 25, 1995. pp. 323-329.

Competence

- ▶ Physicians practice within their professional competence and are accountable for the quality of care

Communications

- ▶ Full and timely communications between physician and patient.

Compassion

- ▶ Empathy for the patient by the physician, and consideration for the physician by the patient

Continuity of care

- ▶ An ongoing physician-patient relationship

Confidentiality

- ▶ Trust that the physician will not disclose private, sensitive, or embarrassing information

(No) Conflict of interest

- ▶ The physician's professional judgment is not be influenced by interests outside his or her relationship with the patient.

Reap the Rewards of Patient Loyalty

How would you like patients who refer their friends, pay their bills on time, are more profitable, and are more enjoyable to have in your practice? In short, how would you like to have loyal patients?

One unfortunate side effect of managed care is the mistaken belief that patients are no longer loyal to their physicians, they choose their doctors by picking names from their insurance plan's list of participating providers, and they will leave a practice at any time for any reason. This becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy when practices economize on patient care, comfort, and convenience. Not only are these shortsighted economies overshadowed by long-term costs, but also the practice misses the benefits of a panel of loyal patients.

First, consider the costs of attracting a patient to your practice: You incur not only marketing and administrative expenses, but you and your staff also spend time getting to know the patient. Next, consider the cost of serving marginally satisfied patients: They're less compliant, less likely to pay their bills, and generally more difficult and more likely to sue. Finally, consider the cost of losing that patient from your practice. Aside from the professional and