



15 Years and Going Strong

Happy crystal anniversary to the RWJBarnabas Health Office Managers Association. Fifteen years is a significant milestone for any union with crystal representing time. What began 15 years ago as a small organization to share ideas has grown into the largest office managers association in New Jersey. Now with more than 3,600 members, the RWJBarnabas Health Office Managers Association shares best practices and provides educational programming, seminars and valuable networking opportunities.

Many office managers have been part of the OMA from the onset and have watched the organization's evolution. Rosalinda Rojas, Practice Manager of Associated Urologists, recalls when the group was just 10 women in a small conference room in Monmouth Medical Center to discuss issues that affect one hospital and has now grown to a systemwide program that helps to make change.

"Being a member (of the OMA) opened up doors and information," said Rojas. "When I was initially asked to join, I was honored to be part of making change and addressing the issues early in healthcare (better known today as managed healthcare). To see the issues brought up at our roundtables addressed, and then implemented, made me proud."

Iris Roseman of Bayside Orthopedics, LLC, has also been with the OMA from the beginning. She credits the OMA for bringing in educational speakers on relevant topics of interest. She also

appreciates her fellow office managers who serve as resources, and the availability of a physician manager if any additional questions or issues arise.

Anita Nicosia of Central Jersey Specialty Surgical Associates has been a longtime member of the OMA and joined the Office Managers Advisory Council at Monmouth Medical Center in 2020. She appreciates the feedback from other practices regarding the day-to-day operations. While in-person meetings have been postponed due to COVID-19, Nicosia has found virtual meetings a great way to meet and network.

Rashmi Saini, an office manager in Toms River, joined the OMA to communicate with others in similar roles. She is an active member of the OMA and makes an effort to attend most of the meetings offered over the years, including CPT Coding, Medicare Updates, etc. Similarly, the ability to facilitate a more engaging relationship between RWJBH and her practice was the impetus for Laura Cino, office manager at Cardiology Consultants of Toms River, to join the OMA.

In 2018, the OMA expanded to include programming in three regions of the state and welcome members from Robert Wood Johnson facilities. At the time, Thomas Biga, President, Hospital Division, RWJBarnabas Health, reflected, "The professional growth and networking opportunities available through membership in the Office Managers Association is unsurpassed in the state allowing office management and its physician office staff the opportunity to be at the forefront of this highly dynamic era in healthcare."

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All the office managers interviewed by *Best Practice* agreed that the “Meet the Insurance Representative” seminars were one of the most valuable educational programs. For example, in a 2018 *Best Practice* article about the “Meet the Rep” fair, Carmela Fleishman, a medical assistant for Dr. Richard Pizzano and Dr. Donato Colavita, reflected, “we need to build relationships with the insurance companies so that we can provide a better understanding of our doctors’ philosophies, why they order the tests that they do and make sure we are all on the same page when it comes to patient care.”

Other educational programs of benefit have been the billing and coding seminars, where yearly changes are explained in detail to help ensure accurate reporting and reimbursement of healthcare services. Longtime presenter Jean Buble, R.N., C.P.C., Senior Vice President of Case Management and HIM, RWJBarnabas Health, has been a resource to OMA for the past 15 years. Buble noted, “Advancements in medical technologies will continue to drive future (CPT code) changes and help ensure accurate reporting and reimbursement of healthcare services.”

As a result of the changing times, OMA has also expanded its OSHA seminars that review new standards and ongoing guidelines on office compliance to include information on workplace violence. Healthcare professionals have become one of the most vulnerable groups to workplace violence, and additional resources are being provided to OMA members to combat the rising statistics of incidents.

As the OMA continues to grow, several office managers commented on the desire for additional educational programming geared towards human resources, including best hiring practices, office equipment recommendations, fostering greater employee communication and increased management strategies.

Rojas also recommends more programming information technology, specifically how to navigate the hospital information systems. She believes enhanced knowledge of where the information resides and how to better submit documents will decrease time spent on paperwork, especially for surgical coordinators and physician assistants, so that more time can be spent with patients. Roseman echoes the increased attention to shared technology, like a shared Google drive where office managers could upload/download forms and other informational documents to help improve efficiencies.

One of the most significant resources OMA provides is the opportunity to network with other office managers and share best practices. “In all of the seminars, we listen and try to help solve each other’s issues, including those in coding, billing or how we engage with employees,” added Saini.

The ability to network with like-minded professionals is most apparent at the OMA’s annual celebration. Each year, more than 200 members gather to reflect on the year in a festive setting. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic postponed the 2020 and 2021 events, and many sorely missed the camaraderie.



Rojas added, “Professionally, the yearly OMA event celebrating our successes has been a highlight and an excellent resource to network with peers.”

In a 2018 speech at the annual OMA celebration, Alyssa Ruby-Mako, Regional Director, Physician Relations, RWJBarnabas Health, reminded her fellow members of the group’s diversity, including different perspectives, work experiences, lifestyles and cultures. However, she stressed that the commonality of the work they do is what makes them such a strong organization.

“OMA has provided a safety net of sorts (for office managers),” added Roseman. “I have been an office manager for 30 years, and there are still situations that can throw me for a loop. When a situation arises in which you don’t know the best way to handle it, you have people who can help.”

Fifteen years later, the organization’s mission remains crystal clear to serve as a resource to office managers. Still, their work continues and grows as the needs of healthcare practitioners evolve.



What Makes a Great Leader?

The past 18 months have been a trying time, to put it mildly. However, it is when people are at their most challenged, leaders emerge.

Many managers are considered leaders by virtue of their title; however, the qualities leaders possess is what makes the title fitting. So, what makes an exceptional leader? According to a research study conducted by the Center for Creative Leadership, the best leaders consistently display these 10 essential leadership qualities:

- **Integrity:** Seems obvious, but overall trust among colleagues is paramount to overall success. Avoid a “do as I say, not as I do” mentality. Leaders adhere to the same standards that they place on their staff. In addition, leaders give credit to those who provide ideas of value.
- **Ability to delegate:** Delegation is not about alleviating oneself from completing a task but rather providing those around them the opportunity to grow, facilitate teamwork, provide autonomy, demonstrate trust and promote collaborative work. Effective leaders empower others by providing them with opportunities to learn new skills and other tools to succeed.
- **Communication:** The ability to effectively transmit ideas, listen and provide feedback to a wide range of constituency groups directly impacts an organization’s overall success. Leaders give employees a voice and make sure to listen when used.
- **Self-awareness:** Leaders need to step outside of themselves to see how others view them. Recognition of one’s strengths and weaknesses allow leaders to better focus on areas of improvement.
- **Gratitude:** Effective leaders are humble yet confident, which resonates with those around them.
- **Learning agility:** The ability to know how to respond when out of one’s comfort zone is a true test of a leader. Situations arise; however, their impact on the organization is dependent on how leaders react. Leaders have no shame in asking others for assistance in areas where they may be lacking skill.
- **Influence:** Sometimes confused with authority, the ability to inspire others to perform is the true measurement of influence. A title has no bearing on a person’s ability to lead.
- **Empathy:** Inclusive behavior shown through compassionate actions makes a more productive team.
- **Courage:** Voicing a new idea, providing feedback to a direct report or addressing concerns can be daunting tasks but are required by leaders to move an organization forward.
- **Respect:** Treating others with respect is one of the most important traits a leader can have. Creating trust amongst colleagues where they feel heard will create a harmonious relationship that exceeds the tasks at hand. Offer praise and constructive criticism when warranted but always with reverence.

Leaders are forever evolving through experiences, continued study and adaptation. More importantly, good leadership begets greater leadership, inspiring others towards collective goals achieved together. Successful organizations continue to foster the development of leaders through enhanced on-the-job training, mentoring, coaching and other leadership development programs.

Meet the Team

For a complete listing of the Physician Management Team members, visit:

<https://www.rwjbh.org/documents/office-managers/OMA-Best-Practice-Newsletter-Winter-2021.pdf>

** All of these photos at OMA events were taken pre-pandemic.*

Healthcare Challenges (and Opportunities) in 2022

As we enter 2022 and the current pandemic still consumes our thoughts, our focus also shifts to other healthcare industry challenges. Below are six topics that *Best Practice* will delve into next year and examine how it affects the OMA community and the opportunities these obstacles present.

Cybersecurity: Data breaches and ransomware have long been a threat, but with the growth of digital health initiatives like remote access and telehealth doctor visits, greater attention is needed on securing patient information. Telemedicine and the ability to log in from anywhere came from necessity the past two years, but these practices will become the norm moving forward. As a result, medical providers must invest in proper safeguards to avoid compromising confidential files and avoid potential penalties for violating compliant standards.

Telehealth: According to a study conducted by McKinsey & Company, telehealth grew from 11% during 2019 to 46% in 2020. While this increase can be directly attributed to COVID-19, 76% of consumers say they are likely to continue using telehealth. In addition, this same study showed that telehealth is poised to take a larger share of the healthcare market, with an estimated 20% of all Medicare, Medicaid, and commercial outpatient, office and home health to be spent on work done virtually.

Invoicing and Payment Processing: Some patients pay a larger percentage of their medical bills out-of-pocket, so offices need to be flexible to ensure timely payments. Paperless statements, text and email reminders, and other payment options are just some possibilities that offices may consider implementing. However, this flexibility can also come with great expense to build and maintain the infrastructure in addition to the extra costs of protecting patient information.



Price Transparency: Your doctor recommends a test, but you don't know how much it will cost you. Will insurance cover it? Patients want a clear understanding of their out-of-pocket costs before undergoing procedures. Physician practices need to be forthright in costs to reduce patient confusion and potential non-payment.

Patient Experience: Medical offices are facing greater competition to attract and retain patients. To stay viable, these offices may need to provide consumer experiences that are not only desirable but user-friendly, including online appointment bookings, patient information portals, downloadable forms, online bill paying and much more.

Big Data: The aggregation of data for patient care continues to challenge the healthcare industry. Medical practitioners have to decipher electronic health records that can be dependent on patient recall, electronic health information exchanges amongst doctors, and clinical data in real-time and on a cost-effective basis. Conversely, the medical community has begun to examine advanced analytics to address socioeconomic, geographic, genomic, demographic and lifestyle behaviors to improve overall health outcomes.

Mental Health Matters

Presenter: Mena Mirhom, MD, Medical Director, Department of Psychiatry, Clara Maass Medical Center

When: Thursday, December 9, 2021; 1-2 p.m.

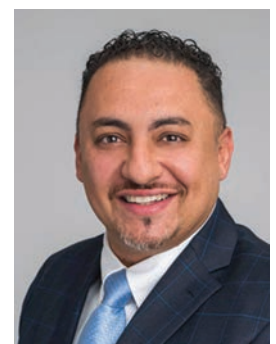
Go-To Meeting: For webinar details, scan the QR code.

Topics Discussed:

- How to handle office stress caused by COVID-19 and now the mutations like the Delta Variant
- How to handle disagreements that come up over vaccinated vs. unvaccinated staff/patients
- How to continue making patients feel safe in your care during a pandemic
- What to do when staff shows sign of struggling with their mental health
- How to manage burn out in you and your staff
- How to handle personal stress and anxiety over your own well-being throughout the pandemic
- How to manage holiday stress
- Resources available to you, your staff and your patients

To join the Mental Health Matters Webinar, kindly RSVP by Monday, December 6, 2021, by calling **1-888-724-7123**, or register online now by scanning the QR code.

Please note that you will also be able to submit questions during the webinar.



Mena Mirhom, MD



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