

Is Your OSHA Program Up to Date?

Office safety is an ongoing endeavor, not a task to check off an ever-growing to-do list. This point was reinforced to more than 125 attendees at two recent seminars presented by the Office Managers Association in early April. The focus of these gatherings was to review both old and new standards and guidelines in an on-going effort to ensure medical offices are OSHA-compliant.

According to Kathleen Voldish, CLC(AMT) of POC Consultants, LLC who presented at each of the seminars for the OMA's northern and southern regions, there are eight OSHA standards in which offices must comply:

- Global Hazard Standard
- Occupational Exposure Standard
- Bloodborne Pathogen Standard
- Tuberculosis Guideline
- Ergonomic Guideline
- Fire and Electrical Standards
- Workplace Emergency Plan Guideline
- Workplace Violence Guideline

OSHA inspections can happen at any time, so it is paramount that offices are always prepared. Inspections are usually prompted from a complaint which can be informal or formal and may not have been made to OSHA but rather to the State Department of Health, the State Medical Board, the State DEP or an insurance company. The OSHA manual is the first step to passing an inspection. If the manual does not reflect current regulations, offices will be immediately cited at an inspection. In addition to reviewing and updating the manual,

there should be written "task specific" policies for that particular office indicated and not just the generic template policies that come with the manual.

"My advice to physician offices with regards to inspections is to make sure to respond in the time frame given," added Voldish. "Do not show anger about the citation, do not lie. If you say that you are going to correct something – do it – and make sure that if they come back, it has been done."

Another common violation cited by OSHA is failure to post the appropriate documents in a common area for employees to see. The documents that must be posted include:

- Job Safety & Health Protection "It's the Law" Poster (updated in 2016)
- How to read a color coded (NFPA) chemical label (if applicable) poster
- Poster on "pictograms" (if applicable)

Physician offices are no longer required to post the OSHA 300 injury and illness log unless specified by that office's state OSHA.

In addition to the review of policies and staff training, the keeping of records is another essential component to maintaining OSHA compliance. Voldish recommends comprehensive record keeping as it pertains to HCS, Bloodborne Pathogen Standard (BPS) and Tuberculosis (TB). She also emphasized that records should be maintained in perpetuity of a product if it was ever involved in an accident or exposure incident.

Voldish concluded the OSHA seminars, stressing the importance of employers and employees to be aware and prepared for any potential disasters. *Best Practice* newsletter also highlighted the importance of a Safety Action Plan (Fall 2018) and Situational Awareness (Winter 2019) as well as a Crisis Plan (Spring 2018).



Safety expert Kathleen Voldish reminds attendees on office safety guidelines.



Office managers receive safety handouts from Kathleen Voldish to use in their offices.

Ask the Practice Management Expert

"Ask The Experts" is a question-and-answer forum featuring leading practice management experts.

Q: What has your office done to maximize efficiency?

A: When Dr. Saulino and I started this practice together in June 2012, we both knew that we were going to have to distinguish ourselves from the outside world. Our top objectives were, and continue to be, delivering high quality care to our patients, treating our staff as family and my being efficient in maximizing revenue with my Certified Coding Certification. When our journey began, Dr. Saulino and I both realized how important it was for me to obtain the education to become a Certified Coder, a Certified Medical Auditor and a Certified Compliance Officer. These certifications have helped to build a foundation for revenue, documentation and compliance in our practice. Dr. Saulino and I have built a great team where almost all of our employees know how to do each other's tasks so there are no set-backs if one of us is not there.

Q: Smaller offices traditionally have limited resources, so what do you attribute to your office's success?

A: Our main focus in the success of this practice is excellence in quality of care and communicating with our patients. When a patient needs a test or procedure, Dr. Saulino knows that I will make sure that the patient is booked in a timely manner, the authorization from the insurance company is complete and our staff can answer whatever questions or concerns the patient may have. I have also streamlined our medical record templates to ensure that they meet the standards to medical necessity. Having my Certified Medical Auditor's license allows me to audit our medical records in the office, and at the hospital, to ensure that they are complete and accurate.

Q: Effective medical recruitment fulfills short-term, as well as long-term needs and goes a long way toward addressing issues like patient satisfaction, employee turnover and better control of medical costs. How do you attract top candidates to a small office environment?

A: I look for candidates who can multi-task working in the front desk and clinical. In a small office it is important to maximize the staff, so you can keep the overhead down and utilize more skills with less people. Everyone has been cross-trained to do multiple jobs. When everyone is on board and can do many jobs, it helps to facilitate the workflow amongst everyone.

Q: Many physicians say mounting paperwork is keeping them from spending enough time with patients. What have you done to help streamline all of the paperwork?

A: I have streamlined our electronic medical record templates for Dr. Saulino, so he can populate all the medical documentation, prescriptions for patients and his assessments in a simplified manner allowing more time for patient care. We are nearly paperless in our office by scanning everything into our patients' portal which includes their medical records. I have also designed our website, so that patients can easily see what our practice offers.

Q: Affordability is a huge factor in whether or not patients comply with doctor recommendations. What additional communication efforts has your office undertaken, so that the doctor and the patient are on the same page with regards to treatment and adherence?

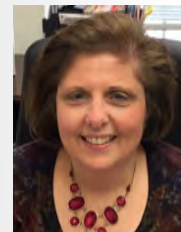
A: Being a smaller office, we have the ability to understand the needs of our patients because we communicate so closely with them. If a patient has a financial hardship in terms of their prescription, healthcare costs or paying a bill, we have the ability to work with the insurance company to come up with other medications that are more affordable.

Q: Change is inevitable especially in the health care industry. It is important to be prepared for changes that may come in order to meet the demands of your patients. How do you prepare?

A: With the three certifications that I hold (Certified Professional Coding, Certified Medical Auditor and Certified Compliance Officer), I am responsible to obtain continuing education units to sustain these certifications. I am constantly educating myself via webinars, attending classes and just reading the material from the insurance companies to manage the latest changes that are evolving in healthcare. It is my due diligence to ensure that we sustain our fee schedule, so I continue to educate myself in PQRS, Meaningful Use and MACRA/MIPS. I also have a patient survey that I implemented in the practice to ensure that our patients can communicate, so if things need to be changed we are able to implement whatever changes that will help to improve our patients' experience.

Our Expert

Jo Ann Hardgrove
Office Manager for
Dr. Patrick F. Saulino, MD,
boarded in cardiovascular
disease



Thirty-one years of healthcare experience is what Jo Ann Hardgrove brings to Dr. Patrick Saulino's practice each day. A well-rounded administrator for the past 10 years, Jo Ann helped create and build Dr. Saulino's practice from the onset. As the Office Manager, Jo Ann is responsible for overseeing the coding, documentation, compliance, and insurance including credentialing, pre-certifications, staffing, training and scheduling for the entire practice. Prior to joining Dr. Saulino, Jo Ann worked for another cardiology group for 14 years in the billing department before becoming a billing manager. A member of the American Academy of Professional Coders, Jo Ann is married with four children.

It's Easy to Be Green

Kermit the Frog once said "it's not easy being green," but that is no longer true as more attention is being given to the preservation of the environment. Thirty years ago, the World Commission on Environment & Development defined an environmentally sustainable organization as one that "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." The definition remains the same today; however, the ability to become environmentally sustainable has gotten far easier and commonplace.

According to the American Medical Association (AMA), the U.S. health care industry contributes to almost 10 percent of the nation's total carbon dioxide emissions. The AMA encourages physicians to serve as role models in the promotion of environmental sustainability as well as educators to their patients and the general public on the overall benefits.

While some initiatives may take time and dedicated finances, there are many smaller changes that can be implemented immediately and with little resources in physicians' offices that can benefit the patients and the planet.

Energy Efficiency

- **Establish a turn-off policy:** If your practice's clinic hours permit, make a practice wide-rule to completely turn off computers, lights, printers, copy and fax machines at the end of each day.
- **Reset thermostats:** Set the office thermostat at 68°F (20°C) in the winter and 74°F (23°C) in the summer for optimal efficiency.
- **Replace lightbulbs:** Light-emitting diode (LED) and compact fluorescent lamp (CFL) bulbs are energy-saving alternatives to incandescent light bulbs, utilizing 75 percent less energy and last up to 25 times longer.

Waste

- **Reduce and recycle:** Create an office policy to buy supplies in bulk and purchase supplies made from – and packaged in – recycled materials. Use recycled paper, print double-sided, go paperless with electronic health records, use a digital fax system to send emails, etc.
- **Recycling Center:** Designate containers in a central area to collect waste.
- **Personal Use:** Encourage staff to use real glasses, mugs, dishes and utensils rather than disposable. Clean the office with products that are not damaging to the environment and make sure the office has at least one large real plant to help recycle air.*

**My Green Doctor*

My Green Doctor (mygreendoctor.org), The American College of Physicians "Climate Change Toolkit" (acponline.org), The Green Guide for Healthcare (gghc.org), and Energy Star (energystar.gov) are resources for physicians and staff offering tools that physician offices can utilize to help make the transition to a green practice.

An ancient Native American proverb attributed to Chief Seattle said it best, "We did not inherit this planet from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children." (Origin Unknown) Let's make sure we don't disappoint our children.

10 Reasons To Green Your Office

1. Wiser and more responsible use of resources
2. Saves money
3. Creates a healthier work environment
4. Facilitates team building
5. Generates ideas from every member of your office
6. Improves employee retention
7. Enhances public relations
8. Contributes to a decrease in pollution
9. Builds a healthier community
10. Makes environmental sustainability part of your life*

**My Green Doctor*



Members, let us know what you would like to see in upcoming issues of Best Practice by calling 1-888-724-7123.

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Save the Date Meet Your Insurance Reps Fair

Central Region

Wednesday, June 5, 2019 | 9 to 11 am
APA Hotel Woodbridge
120 Wood Avenue South, Iselin, NJ
**First time to offer a program in the
Central Region.**

Southern Region

Thursday, June 6, 2019 | 9 to 11 am
Jack Baker's Lobster Shanty
83 Channel Drive, Point Pleasant, NJ

Northern Region

Thursday, June 13, 2019 | 9 to 11 am
Cedar Hill Golf and Country Club
100 Walnut Street, Livingston, NJ

Representatives from AmeriHealth, Cigna, Evicore, Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield, Horizon NJ Health, Multiplan, Oxford, Qualcare, UnitedHealthcare Community Plan and UnitedHealthcare will be available to answer any questions.

Breakfast will be provided.

Kindly register by May 29 via www.rwjbh.org/oma, by calling 1-888-724-7123 or emailing Teamlink@rwjbh.org