



A Publication for **Saint Barnabas Health Care System** Physicians' Office Administrators and Staff

BEST *Practice*

Welcome to the premier issue of *Best Practice*, a newsletter designed to assist you in managing a professional and efficient physician office practice. The newsletter will introduce important trends in the field and help you stay current with the latest state and federal compliance regulations in the midst of a rapidly changing health care environment. In addition, *Best Practice* will feature suggestions that you can initiate in the office to improve daily operations, as well as provide patients and staff with a pleasant environment.

By now you should have also received an invitation to join Saint Barnabas Health Care System's Office Managers' Association. Among the benefits of membership are a variety of educational and networking activities. Your participation with the Association will ensure the physician office staff and patients have direct access to all the resources the Saint Barnabas Health Care System facilities offer and will also help us tailor our services to meet your needs.

The Saint Barnabas Health Care System is pleased to serve you.

John A. Brennan, M.D.
Senior Vice President, Clinical and Emergency Services
Saint Barnabas Health Care System

Keeping Patient Satisfaction High

Every interaction a person has with his/her physician and the office staff leaves a strong impression. Even when everyone involved does his/her best to provide quality compassionate care, sometimes things do not go as planned. Very often, patients' and family members' ability to communicate their needs are impacted by medication, stress or misunderstanding. To maintain the valuable trust patients place in their doctor and staff, it is important to address dissatisfaction — whether it be minor or major — as soon as possible.

When problems do arise, be sure that your staff is prepared. Develop a plan for dealing with difficulties and educate the entire staff on the importance of listening, responding with empathy, and apologizing at the first opportunity. Sometimes just acknowledging the problem and accepting responsibility is enough to resolve a situation. In every case, a staff member or supervisor should ask the patient how he or she can make the situation better and then follow through to be sure a resolution was achieved.

Seize Control of Drug Reps Visits

Managing pharmaceutical sales rep visits can consume hours of time. Multiple daily solicitations make it hard to stay on schedule. Physician office administrators can control drug rep visits and eliminate lost productivity.

- ❖ *Work with the physician to determine which reps are important to the practice and which are irrelevant and spend time accordingly.*
- ❖ *Establish a uniform policy for receiving drug reps and be firm. It will take some time to establish an office policy, but it will save hours of staff time throughout the year.*
- ❖ *Schedule drug rep visits instead of accommodating them when they randomly arrive at the physician's office. What are the most convenient times during the week for the physician to spend a few minutes with a drug rep?*
- ❖ *Assign a single staff member to schedule and handle drug rep visits, or consider subscribing to an online service that can schedule drug rep visits according to the physician's preferences.*

Medicare Cuts on the Horizon

Doctors will experience an approximate 10 percent Medicare reimbursement cut in 2008 due to the same law that spared them from a 5 percent cut this year, according to the Congressional Budget Office. The Tax Relief and Health Care Act of 2006 held Medicare physicians rates for 2007 at the 2006 level, but also specified that the payments would revert to the prior-law level in 2008. Physicians will absorb two years of cuts in 2008, unless Congress takes further action.

Software Upgrades

Outdated office practice software cannot keep pace with the needs of a modern physician practice. An investment in new software offers improved overall staff productivity and better compliance with HIPAA and other regulations. It also provides faster and more accurate claims processing with the ability to submit electronically.

When choosing a software package, consider how it will interact with your electronic medical records, as the data generated between the two applications will overlap. Narrow down your options by analyzing your current system and making a list of questions for vendors. Technical support is an important option. You may be able to negotiate an agreement for technical support by offering to be a visitor site where other practices can view that software in action.

Once you have purchased the software, it is vital to carefully train the staff who will be using it. Keep the transition positive and insist on full compliance so everyone adjusts to the new system as quickly as possible.

Making Scheduling Easier for All

New Scheduling and Financial Clearance Procedure

To improve communication with physician offices and reduce patient waiting times for tests and procedures, Saint Barnabas Health Care System has standardized its scheduling procedure. Please have the following information at hand when you call to make an appointment for patients.

- ❖ Patient's First, Middle, and Last Name
- ❖ Patient's Birth Date
- ❖ Patient's Social Security Number
- ❖ Chief Complaint/Admitting Diagnosis (ICD-9 Preferred)
- ❖ Procedure and CPT Code
- ❖ Hospital Service and Assigned Clinic
- ❖ Date of Service/Admission Date
- ❖ Admitting Physician (IP) or Referring Physician (OP) Name and Number
- ❖ Patient's Address, City, State, Zip Code, and County
- ❖ Patient's Phone Number (Including Area Code)
- ❖ Patient's Alternative Phone Number (Including Area Code)
- ❖ Referral/Pre-Authorization Number
- ❖ Primary Care Provider (PCP) Name and Telephone
- ❖ Insurance Plan Name and Policy Number

Directors of Physician Services

The Saint Barnabas Health Care System provides physicians and their office staff with a direct link to our Saint Barnabas System hospitals through the Directors of Physician Services. These physician liaisons can help you become familiar with our variety of services and assist you in accessing them. They are committed to ensuring that doctors, as well as their office staff and patients, have a flawless experience at all of the Saint Barnabas Health Care System facilities.

For more information about the Saint Barnabas Health Care System or assistance with any of our services, please contact a Director of Physician Services:

- ❖ **Shari Beime** 732.914.3805
Saint Barnabas Behavioral Health
- ❖ **Carrie Cristello** 973.322.7345
Saint Barnabas Ambulatory Care Center
- ❖ **Jean Flaherty** 732.557.2296
Community Medical Center
- ❖ **Fran Monteleone** 973.450.2997
Clara Maass Medical Center
- ❖ **Jessi Rosenbaum** 973.926.3636
Newark Beth Israel Medical Center
- ❖ **Alyssa Ruby-Mako** 732.557.7168
Kimball Medical Center
- ❖ **Lydia Spingler** 973.322.2827
Saint Barnabas Medical Center
- ❖ **Eileen VandeBunte** 732.923.7535
Monmouth Medical Center

Improving the Health of Your Practice —

There are common challenges to running an efficient, yet pleasant, physician office practice. While many problems cannot be eliminated altogether, these creative solutions can help you clear the biggest hurdles.

Part I: Finding and Keeping Staff

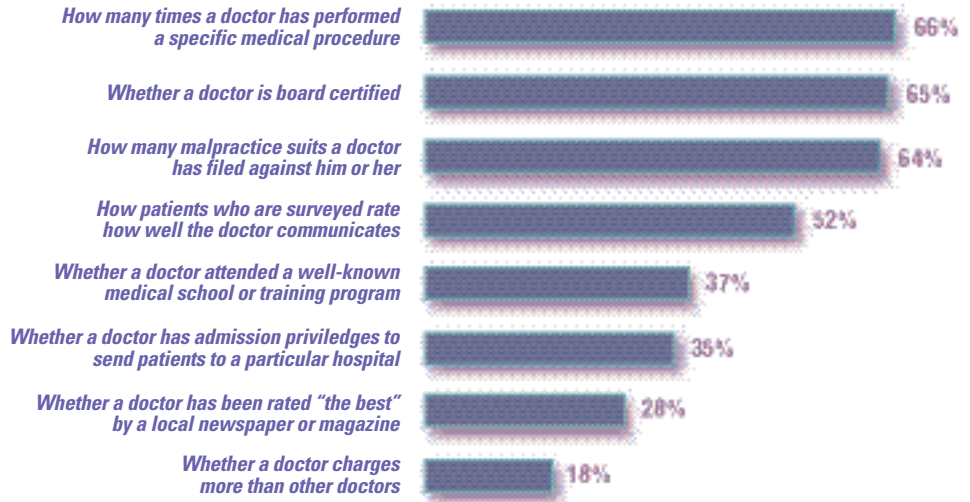
Finding and keeping a great staff is important to every business. Maintaining a skilled and experienced team is paramount to running an efficient physician practice. One of the best ways to encourage longevity is to make the workplace more interesting. Challenging your employees in ways that keep them engaged and fulfilled will benefit your practice in the long term.

Provide solid training and support. Unfortunately, some of the critical functions in a busy office are also the most monotonous. One antidote to the tedium can be cross-training employees to perform in multiple areas of the practice. This adds variety and builds everyone's professional credentials, as well as providing office flexibility.

You can also add an element of fun with occasional events that say you appreciate your staff's dedication. These can be simple and inexpensive events throughout the year like hosting a staff lunch, or celebrating the change of season with an ice cream social for staff and patients.

Determining Physician Quality

Percent of people who say each of the following would tell them "a lot" about the quality of a doctor



Source: Kaiser Family Foundation/Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality/Harvard School of Public Health National Survey on Consumers' Experiences with Patient Safety and Quality Information, November 2004 (Conducted July 7 – September 5, 2004).

Put Saint Barnabas Health Care Link to Work For You: 1.888.7262.DOC

Scheduling

When patients call the Saint Barnabas Health Care System Link we schedule appointments for them, remind them 24 hours in advance and place follow-up calls after the visit so you can gain valuable feedback regarding your service.

Specialist and Insurance Information

Our database has access to every specialist in the Saint Barnabas Health Care System as well as the corresponding insurance providers. We do the searching and the scheduling for you.

Marketing and Growing Your Practice

Let us provide suggestions for establishing a more prominent name in the community. From health fairs to speaking engagements, we can help you determine

the appropriate methods to make the physician and his/her practice more highly recognized.

1.888.SBHS.123 or 1.888.724.7123

Saint Barnabas Health Care Link provides a single point of access to any information related to Saint Barnabas Health Care System, its programs/services, physicians and facilities. Patients can find a physician and can even make an appointment by calling the Link. **During March 2007, 45 percent of all physician referrals were translated into actual appointments for physicians registered on the Link.** Physicians may contact their respective physician liaison or the Saint Barnabas Health Care Link (888-726-2362) to update their professional profiles at anytime.

Join NJ's Largest Office Managers' Association

The professional growth and networking opportunities available through membership in the Saint Barnabas Health Care System Office Managers' Association will help keep you and your physician's office at the forefront in this highly dynamic era in health care.

The Office Managers' Association, the largest such organization in NJ, will offer its members online educational opportunities, in addition to seminars on such topics as billing, and collection, changes in Medicare, credentialing, strategic growth initiatives, and more. Educational toolkits and *Best Practice* are also unique resources available to members.

To join the Saint Barnabas Health Care System Office Managers' Association, please complete this card and return to:

*Saint Barnabas Health Care System
368 Lakehurst Road, Suite 304A, Toms River, New Jersey 08755*

Name: _____

Name of Practice: _____

Physician(s): _____

Office Address: _____

Office Phone: _____

Office Fax: _____

Hospital(s) of Affiliation: _____

Home Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Topics of Interest for educational seminars and lectures:

