

Help Just a Mouse Click Away

Online Resource for Office Managers Debuts

This spring, the Saint Barnabas Office Managers Association launched a Web site dedicated to helping office managers in a host of practice management areas.

On-line resources of the new Web site – [www.sbofficemanagers.com](http://www.sbofficemanagers.com) – include industry news, events/meeting calendar, education and training and resource links, as well as information on joining the Saint Barnabas Office Managers Association that outlines member benefits.

The Web site also will feature the SBHCS Link, detailing the benefits of the system referral service, how it works and how to participate. Visitors to the site can even download a copy of the physician referral application, submit profiles and photos and get updates on the SBHCS Physician Locator that is a feature of the Saint Barnabas Health Care System consumer Web site.

To learn more or provide feedback on the Web site, visit [www.sbofficemanagers.com](http://www.sbofficemanagers.com) and click on the "Contact Us" link.

Members, let us know what you would like to see in upcoming issues of Best Practice by calling 1.888.724.7123, and press 1..



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

'Go-Green' Strategies for Office Managers

Going "green" doesn't have to be radical — office managers can make a gradual shift to energy-conserving changes, one change at a time.

A recent *Time* magazine article titled "Going Green at the Office" noted that one office worker can use a quarter of a ton of office materials in a year — including 10,000 pieces of copier paper. Heating, cooling and powering office spaces are responsible for almost 40 percent of carbon dioxide emissions in the U.S. and take up more than 70 percent of total electricity usage.

Simple tips for an environmentally friendly office include switching to compact florescent light bulbs (CFL's), which last 10 times longer and save on electric bills. Turning out lights in rooms not in use saves energy too.

Programmable heating and cooling systems are a quick way to make offices more energy efficient. During summer when no one is in the office, managers can program the office to 85 degrees and lower it to 78 degrees one hour before the office reopens. An "Energy Star" certified thermostat can help.

To learn more about going green to reduce overall environmental impact and promote environmental stewardship, visit [www.regeneration.org/tips](http://www.regeneration.org/tips) or [www.greenlivingideas.com](http://www.greenlivingideas.com).

Patient Satisfaction in the Physician's Office the Focus of Seminars

Ways to improve a medical practice and the latest industry trends and best practices were the focus of a recent series of patient satisfaction seminars offered for members of the Saint Barnabas Health Care System Office Managers Association.

As part of the Office Managers Association Educational Series, Stephanie Whalen of Press Ganey Associates Inc. discussed "Tips for Generating Higher Levels of Patient Satisfaction in the Physician's Office." She outlined industry trends, patient satisfaction as a strategic asset, key drivers of patient satisfaction and best practices.

Whalen discussed the 2007 Physician's Office and Outpatient Pulse Report, Patient Perspectives on American Health Care, which examined the experiences of more than 4.6 million patients at 6,163 doctor's offices and more than 2,500 outpatient facilities throughout the nation in 2006. She noted that while patient satisfaction is still overlooked by many medical practices that regard it as unimportant and feel, "Who has time to be nice? We're just trying to get through the day," patient satisfaction is critical to the success of a physician practice.



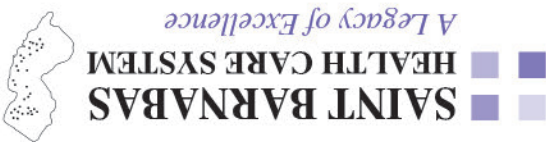
Gathering at one of the recent patient satisfaction seminars are office managers Margo Peters of Monmouth Medical Group, PC; Peggy Rea of Sea Girt Medical Associates; Carol Foster, office manager for MMC surgeon Michael Goldfarb, M.D.; Cathy Musolf of Gastroenterologists of Ocean County, PA; Karen Murray of Gastroenterologists of Ocean County, and Linda Baxendale of Monmouth Medical Group, PC.

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Clean Air for health care

As of November 20, 2008, smoking on SBHCS campuses will be a thing of the past, as we strive to further promote good health and a healthy environment for our patients, employees and the community as a whole.

- Directors of Physician Services  
The Saint Barnabas Health Care System provides physicians and their office staff with a direct link to our hospitals through the Directors of Physician Services.
- ❖ Shari Belme Saint Barnabas Behavioral Health 732.914.3805
  - ❖ Lauren Burke Cardiovascular Services 973.926.2632
  - ❖ Judy Webster Saint Barnabas Ambulatory Care Center 973.322.7345
  - ❖ Jean Flaherty Saint Barnabas Health Care System 732.557.2296
  - ❖ Audrey Petersen Community Medical Center 732.557.3940
  - ❖ Fran Monteleone Clara Maass Medical Center 973.450.2997
  - ❖ K. Crystal Pate Saint Barnabas Nursing and Rehabilitation Centers 908.624.2331
  - ❖ Jessi Rosenbaum Saint Barnabas Health Care System 732.923.7523
  - ❖ Eileen Vandebunte Monmouth Medical Center 732.923.7535
  - ❖ Alyssa Ruby-Mako Kimball Medical Center 732.557.7168
  - ❖ Lydia Spingler Saint Barnabas Medical Center 973.322.2827
  - ❖ Currently Recruiting Newark Beth Israel Medical Center





## Patient Satisfaction *continued from page 1*

"Patient-centered care is no longer simply a goal; it's a condition of participation," she said. "Patients evaluate the entire experience — from the initial call for an appointment, to the wait time, to seeing the doctor, and the follow-up."

Key findings of the Press, Ganey research included:

- ❖ Patients are increasingly pleased with the quality of services they receive at their physicians' offices. At a time when competition is growing with emerging retail competitors, medical practices must continue to improve in order to retain patients.
- ❖ Patients want the staff at their physicians' offices to be sensitive to their needs. They want to be seen in a timely manner. Pleasantness of the environment is also important to them.
- ❖ A conservative 5 percent dissatisfaction rate among patients can cost a physician \$150,000 in revenue.
- ❖ The costs associated with lost patients — from the expense of acquiring new patients to reduced capitation rates — add up quickly. It is simply more cost effective to satisfy the patients you have than to continually attract more.
- ❖ Patients expect that they will receive appropriate diagnoses and treatments. What sets a practice apart from the competition is the patient experience.
- ❖ Among patients, word of mouth is the very best advertising for a medical practice. Recommendations from existing patients and referrals from other practices are key to attracting new patients.
- ❖ Thank customers for bringing complaints or concerns to your attention, and train all front-line office staff in service recovery, communication skills and emotions management. Learn and practice service recovery steps: acknowledge, apologize and act to amend.

## Compliance/HIPAA Zone

### *NPI: Noncompliance May Affect Your Cash Flow*

National Provider Identifier (NPI) is here. Are you using your NPI in electronic transactions? If you aren't, be prepared for the costly, time-consuming consequences.

To comply with the federal regulation, we must reject noncompliant claims and real-time transactions after the deadline. Rejected transactions result in more work for your office staff and may interrupt your cash flow.

### *What NPI compliance means*

As of May 23, which was the NPI enforcement date, HIPAA standard electronic transactions must include NPIs and cannot include legacy identifiers. Transactions that don't have an NPI or that include a legacy provider identifier will be rejected and returned as "unprocessible." Tax IDs are still required on claims.

### *Share and use your NPI now*

If you haven't gotten your NPI already, you're well behind schedule, as the original deadline for obtaining an NPI is long past. You can use your NPI immediately on insurance claims. However, payers can only accept your NPI in real-time transactions if it has been previously shared with them and entered into their databases. Otherwise, the transaction will fail.

If you haven't shared your NPI with your payers, do so immediately.

To learn more, visit the CMS Web site at [www.cms.hhs.gov](http://www.cms.hhs.gov).

## CMS Debuts New E-Mail Update Service

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services has changed the system it uses to send e-mail updates.

The previous electronic mailing list was replaced on March 31 with a new e-mail update service. The new service notifies participants via e-mail when changes are made to the CMS QPU Web page.

In order to ensure that you receive your subscription e-mails and announcements, add [cmslists@subscriptions.cms.hhs.gov](mailto:cmslists@subscriptions.cms.hhs.gov) to your contact list, adjust your spam settings, or follow the instructions from your e-mail provider on how to prevent CMS e-mails from being marked "spam" or "junk mail." CMC assures its e-mail list participants that their e-mail addresses will only be used to deliver the information requested, and to give access to profiles of subscriptions. Participants can view and/or change profiles at any time by visiting [www.cms.hhs.gov/AboutWebsite/20\\_EmailUpdates.asp](http://www.cms.hhs.gov/AboutWebsite/20_EmailUpdates.asp).

*If you have questions or problems with the subscription service, contact [support@subscriptions.cms.hhs.gov](mailto:support@subscriptions.cms.hhs.gov).*

## Coming This Fall... "Human Resource Issues in the Office Practice"

**Tuesday, September 19**  
Saint Barnabas Medical Center  
and Ambulatory Care Center

**Monday, September 25**  
Clara Maass, Newark Beth Israel,  
Monmouth, Community and  
Kimball Medical Centers.

Watch for special mailing on this  
Office Managers Association  
seminar.

## Our Experts:



**Margo Peters, R.N.**, has spent the last 10 years overseeing Monmouth Medical Group — a 25-member multispecialty physician group that also employs about 80 staff members.



**Mary Hecker C.M.M., CCS-P**, began her career in physician office management running the office of retired Monmouth Medical Center general surgeon Frank Gudicello, M.D., with whom she worked for 20 years. She has worked for Dr. Chagares since 1998.

## Ask the Practice Management Experts

"Ask the Experts" is a question-and-answer forum featuring leading practice managers. In this issue of *Best Practice*, we ask Margo Peters, R.N., of Monmouth Medical Group, and Mary Hecker, C.M.M., CCS-P, who works for Monmouth Medical Center general surgeon Stephen Chagares, M.D., office practice managers who together have 60 years experience, to field general questions about the challenges of managing an office in today's complex health care environment.

### *What are some of the most difficult issues facing an office manager today?*

**Margo:** Probably the most difficult issue facing an office manager today is dealing with all of the policy changes implemented by insurance carriers. Years ago, we used to see changes once, or maybe twice, a year, but now we see multiple changes occurring quarterly. In the ever-changing environment we work in, we are dealing with change almost on a daily basis.

**Mary:** Today's office has to be run like a business, and it's a business with rising operating costs and decreasing reimbursements. But you have to balance the business side with the need to emphasize patient care. And that sets the tone of the office — that taking care of the patient comes first. That means that days can be long, as we never want any patient to feel rushed, but we find that balance by working as a team.

### *What advice would you give managers to help deal with these issues?*

**Margo:** I would tell them to network — to set aside time maybe two or three times a month to look at what is available to help them. For example, there are electronic mailing lists from professional organizations that keep managers in touch with updates and changes. CMS sends updates almost daily for office managers to help stay on top of updated Medicare information. Office managers see a lot of information coming at them, and they need to know where to find and share that information with all of the staff. The more informed the staff, the better running the practice.

**Mary:** I would stress creating and reinforcing teamwork, and let them know that the physician is a very big part of that teamwork. The best way to keep that balance — between the business and patient care sides — is working as a team and remembering that the patient always does come first.

### *If you were training a new manager to take over an office practice, what advice would you give to that person?*

**Margo:** Stay calm, and listen. Listening is so important as it allows you to analyze before making a decision. If you make a mistake, say that you did, and then re-examine the information, pull the team together and plot a new course.

**Mary:** Take advantage of the office managers' programs offered by the hospitals to network with other managers. It's a great way to share concerns, solutions and contacts. I'd encourage them to become a part of professional organizations such as the Saint Barnabas Health Care System Office Managers Association so that they can continue learning. After 30 years managing a physician practice, if there's a seminar, I'm there! Knowledge is power.

*Have a practice management question? Ask an expert! Call us at 1.888.724.7123, and press 1.*