Help Just a Mouse Click Away

Online Resource for Office Managers Debuts

This spring, the Saint Barnabas Health Care System 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 – include industry news, event/meeting calendar, education and training and resource links, as well as information on joining the Saint Barnabas Health Care System's Office Managers Association and outlining 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's consumer Web site.

To learn more or provide feedback on the Web site, visit 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.

There is still time to join the Saint Barnabas Health Care System Office Managers Association. Please complete this card and return it to Saint Barnabas Health Care System, 368 Lakeshore Road, Suite 304A, Toms River, NJ 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: __________________________

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 “Growing Green at the Office” noted that one office worker can use a quarter of a ton of office materials in a year — including 10,200 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 fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs), 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 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 or www.greenlivinglive.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.


Whelan 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, “Who has the most patients? Who has the most in the area? We’re just trying to get through the day,” patient satisfaction is critical to the success of a physician practice.

Clean Air for health care

Continuing its legacy of excellence in health care and as part of the 32nd Great American Smokeout, all of the Saint Barnabas Health Care System’s southern facilities will officially become smoke-free. 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.
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 FQBP Web page.

In order to ensure that you receive your subscriptions e-mails and announcements, add cms@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." CMS 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/AboutWebsite20_EmailUpdates.asp.

If you have questions or problems with the subscription service, contact contact@subscriptions.cms.hhs.gov.

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.

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 Hocker, C.M.M., CCS-P, who works for Monmouth Medical Center's general surgeon Stephen Chapparies, M.D., of 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 see at least 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 that information of all of the stuff. 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 comes 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 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'll encourage them to become 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 1.800.724.7123 and press 1.