

## Physician Relations through Practice Management Education

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Over the years, there has been one physician relations strategy that has been consistently beneficial to physicians – that is providing access to good training and education on practice management issues. This may include hospital sponsored programs or simply keeping physicians and their managers advised of programs and resources available. This applies not only to hospital owned practices and employed physicians but also private practices.

The importance of getting updated information on coding, insurance reimbursement, HIPAA, Medicare compliance, patient satisfaction, billing and collecting, office efficiency, computer technology, financial management and employee productivity is crucial for effective practice management. There are many good speakers and educators that can present very practical information to physicians and managers to assist them in day to day operations.

Here are some considerations on delivering this support service to your medical staff:

1. Make sure your speaker resources are physician office experienced. Don't assume that a speaker on hospital coding, HIPAA, compliance, billing, computer applications or financial management will have entirely applicable information of interest to physicians and medical office employees.
2. Secure resources from creditable associations and businesses that are exclusively devoted to practice management. Example: A company that focuses on hospital consulting in marketing, strategy, research, planning or information systems may not be your best bet. The [Practice Management Institute](#) offers extensive seminars and programs applicable to the needs of physicians and their office staff.
3. If you elect to sponsor a program, don't limit your announcement and invitations to just a few physicians on staff. It should be an excellent way to reach outlying practices. Such programs are also a plus when appealing to physician recruit candidates.
4. Develop a program of practice management classes to new recruited physicians and their staff. This can give you a competitive edge on recruiting doctors when you offer ongoing training to help them with the business of medicine.
5. When offering workshops, include subjects directed to employees other than the manager and billing staff such as the receptionist, medical assistant and nurse. When you demonstrate your interest in helping employees with their job, you enhance physician relations.
6. Don't limit your topics to coding, HIPAA and Medicare compliance. Although these are popular and have great importance to physicians and practices, other topics presented can make even bigger improvements for offices.
7. When a hospital presents the opportunities for training to physicians and their staff, it should put some "marketing punch" into the announcement of the programs. Instead of just announcing a CPT and ICD-9CM workshop or how to deal with HIPAA seminar, present an agenda that jumps out at them as very practical and useful. Keep in mind, survey after survey says physicians want ways to ease the paper work and business aspects, have more free time, be able to deal with regulations more effectively and obtain better billing and reimbursement results.

8. One of the problems with workshops is achieving attendance from physicians and their employees. They will contend that they can't afford the time away from the office – simply too busy. Rather than only offering ½ day or full day presentations, consider 2 hour sessions around the noon hour or early morning. Again, the hospital representative that sets up the programs must be able to communicate and emphasize the value of the information that makes it worth 2-8 hours out of the office.
9. Rather than trying to set the perfect date and time for a large number of attendees from several practices, consider scheduling multiple sessions over time for small groups. The cost of a speaker needs to be considered, but this can often be worked out if your goal is to reach several physicians.
10. Though it may not be practical in the eyes of the physician, encourage attendance of the physician with 2-3 other employees. This develops a team approach and it is more likely that they will implement ideas when they go back to their practice. This team attendance works especially well on topics of coding and documentation for reimbursement.
11. If on-site training and workshops are not your strategy, then at least:
  - a. Provide physicians and managers with a list of proven resources.
  - b. Get on the mail list of top practice management training organizations so that you can advise physicians when they are scheduled in the area.
  - c. If you or a person on staff is experienced in practice management and have the time to present the sessions, there are training material packages available with textbooks, videos, PowerPoint presentations, audio tapes, workbooks and instruction manuals. They cover virtually every area of practice management and you can customize your own training program. They can also be utilized for training in the medical office setting.
12. Another step to give practice management support and education is to provide physicians and managers access to a library of publications, audiotapes, videotapes, CDs, reference manuals, special reports and information packets. Again, many practices are not totally aware of the tools available to make their jobs easier and improve operations. Depending upon the relationship with the practice, selected materials can be offered as part of the hospital/practice affiliation or offered at a discount group purchase rate.

Finally, some physicians and their office managers prefer no intervention from a hospital or other organization. They may have a membership with an association that lends support in practice management but as is often the case, they are not aware of many other resources. Also, when they need information, they need it fast. They don't have time to search for solutions.

So, what do you do for them in practice management? You can only offer resources that are at "arms length" and independent of the hospital. If physicians have quick and easy access to your resources for solutions and they are specific to their needs, a hospital gains in physician relations.

Publications regarding this topic on website [www.practicesupport.com](http://www.practicesupport.com) include:

[Assist-a-Doc Tools](#)

[Practice Management Tools for Physician Retention](#)