

New Year's Resolutions for Physicians



Like many, you might start your January with a few New Year's resolutions in mind, whether you're looking to get healthier, travel more or learn a new skill. But don't leave your medical practice off your list! Even if your practice is thriving, there's always room for improvement. Not quite sure where to start? Think about adding these ideas to your list of resolutions.

Improve medical practice operational efficiency

What are the tasks that require the most staff time, and can you use technology to reduce the burden? For example, do patients and other providers frequently call the practice asking for the fax number and address? If so, include this information on your website and in your initial voicemail prompt. Do new patients often forget to come in early to fill out paperwork? If so, send paper forms in the mail before the visit, or go paperless using technology that prompts patients to provide information electronically.

Reduce claims rejections

A 5%-10% denial rate is industry average; however, keeping the denial rate below 5% is more advantageous because it promotes smooth cash flow. Do you know your overall denial rate? What about your denial rates by payer? Pay attention to the remark code for every denial, and look for trends. Even one small change (e.g., verifying insurance before rendering services) can reduce denials significantly.

Try telehealth

Telehealth is the future. Telehealth proffers a gamut of advantages, including improved workflow, expanded services, and greater accessibility to your patients. Furthermore, Medicare now reimburses for telehealth, so that's another upside to integrating telehealth into your practice.

Care using telehealth is particularly useful when visiting with patients in rural areas, patients with chronic health conditions, patients with disabilities, patients with psychiatric illness or substance use disorders, and patients who lack access to transportation. Many experts applaud telemedicine for decreasing wait times and improving follow-up.

Go paperless

Even with EHR in place, many physicians are still flooded with paper, including cover letters, intake forms, referrals, outside imaging, lab slips, and more. Look for ways to decrease your paper footprint, including the use of email to send patient registration forms.

Make EHR work for you

Many physicians complain that EHR makes their practice of medicine more challenging by serving up tons of information and burying the most relevant patient details. Additionally, doctors complain that EHR detracts from the patient dynamic by decreasing facetime. Improving the EHR experience could involve programming customized templates, forms and plug-ins, with an eye toward efficiency. Another solution involves experimenting with different types of EHR systems to figure out which one works best for your practice.

Practice preventive medicine

Even if you're a specialist, you can still engage your patients in preventive health counseling. Remember to view the patient in holistic terms. A few words of advice on diet, nutrition, and exercise can do a world of good when coming from a compassionate authority figure. You may also consider engaging the community in preventive health counseling through attending events such as health fairs.

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