

Technology

Not all management software is equal: 10 tips to pick the best

Chiropractic practice-management software isn't glamorous. It doesn't add comfort to the office surroundings. And it's not something you normally show your patients and brag about. But the right software can help you control costs, retain patients, improve productivity, reduce human error and expand.

By Derek Greenwood

The trick is to pick the right software. And that's not easy, because not all software is created equally. The starting point to select the best software for your office is to identify your needs.

- Pick out, with the help of your staff, the deficiencies of your current software.
- List what you would like the software to accomplish.
- Prioritize your needs in terms of what's most important and most urgent to you and your staff.

Once you have your needs identified and prioritized, use this list of questions to help you find the software that best meets your needs:

1. Programming language. The first software originally created for chiropractic clinics was written in DOS programming language. Software that is adapted from DOS rather than written for Windows may not respond as well as expected. You should also keep in mind that Microsoft no longer supports DOS programming.

2. Integrated appointment and billing capabilities. Your software should have scheduling and billing capabilities – features that are critical to patient retention and financial solvency. Individuals who use the software should be able to perform all tasks without having to change screens or fumble through menus. The right software will already be programmed to go to the next logical step and help you through the procedure quickly, correctly and unerringly.

3. E-billing and insurance follow up. If your priority is cash flow, you will also want the software to have e-billing and insurance follow up features.

4. Reports. Reports play an important part in the health of your practice. Make sure the software you are considering can produce the types of reports that you need. And if you have specialized needs, you may want to consider software that allows you to produce easily customized reports.

5. Messaging capabilities. How do you deal with inter-office communication, when you're busy with patients all the time? How do you let the other DC's, CA's and staff know what is the latest change, warning, arrival, urgent need or query? Some integrated software programs offer messaging capabilities.

6. Note writing. For some chiropractors, having the ability to write notes, letters and procedures is a high priority.

7. Marketing. Some software programs can help you identify the proper timing of a marketing or advertising campaign as well as analyze the success of marketing efforts and track costs.

8. Inventory control. A substantial and growing income source of many practices is adjunct

sales. Maintaining adequate inventory levels of ancillary products will insure that you never miss those important sales. Knowing your rate of sale per item and its best price availability can put extra dollars in the register effortlessly.

9. Learning curve. Some software loads fast, accepts transfer of data readily and is easy to learn. But, to make sure, ask to speak to a fellow DC who uses the software you are considering. Talk to one of the technicians that service the software and request a “live” demonstration that you and your staff can watch together on your own computer.

10. Tech support. Consider the availability of technical support. Make a list of questions to ask the technician, then dial in and find out how easy it is to get your answers.

Derek Greenwood is CEO of EON Systems, manufacturers of TPS 2000, The Practice Solution, Chiropractic administrative software, in Clearwater FL. For more information please contact Derek at (800) 955-6448.