Don’t Let Paperwork Stall Your Growth!

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If someone had told me that running a software business would be more akin to being “Dear Abby” than to selling, I would have laughed. In my 10 years at the helm of a chiropractic software company, I’ve answered every kind of question one could possibly fathom, including ones on animal therapy. We are constantly getting calls from doctors and CA’s asking questions about software, of course; but the list of other questions could, easily, be classified as interminable. Some of the answers turn into discussions, which can go on at some length; but we always find the data they’re looking for and, in particular, the answers to their practice management difficulties.

Over the past few months, however, the scope has narrowed dramatically and pointedly, to the following three. Let me save you a call by giving you, here, our definitive answers.

1. “Do you have e-billing?”
2. “Does your software have some way to follow up on the bills that we send to insurance companies?’
3. “How do you handle the mountain of reports, letters, SOAP’s, narratives, and other activities that require a ton of personal or staff time in a busy office?”

Each one of these questions stems from a problem, or multiple problems, that occurs within the office. These problems are not unique to one particular doctor or office, but are global in scope. If you deal with insurance companies, you will have difficulties that will generate one or all of the above questions.

Here is an example: Dr. A has a practice that is expanding. He is seeing more and more patients every month and is quite happy with helping all of these people. Then, it comes to his attention that the income does not seem to be increasing to the same degree the practice is expanding. He goes to Miss CA and asks where the money is for all the good work he has been doing.

She proceeds to tell him about bills that got lost in the mail, how much time it takes her to call every insurance company to get them to pay the bills, and asks Dr. A where the reports are that she needs to get the rest of the bills out. She also says that she has had 15 different bills rejected for lack of SOAP notes, and has not had time yet this month to send out patient statements.

Dr. A goes back to his office and starts to think, “I wonder if these problems are real, or are they caused by an employee that doesn’t know what she is doing? Do I need to change my employee? Does she need more training?” Many doctors decide to do both: They hire new employees and, then, spend time and money training them. The only problem is that, quite often, the same problems remain. They are still not getting paid.

Now, Dr. A thinks back to what his first CA said a long time ago, and decides that maybe she was doing a good job and that the problems she described were real. Miss CA and Dr. A sit down together and decide that the problem is that billing is too slow, it is hard to collect from insurance companies, and there is just too much paperwork. They also decide that too many patients slip out the door and are lost in the shuffle. They notice this because Dr. A is constantly walking out of the adjusting room saying something like, “Whatever happened to Irene?”

Let Your Software Do the Walking

Luckily there is a solution that is well mapped out—a solution where, with a little work, Dr. A and Miss CA can have complete control of their situations and GET PAID! And that solution is found in the use of modern office management software.

A chiropractic office is unique, in that there are a great many patients who visit in a day. Each one of these visits requires some degree of paperwork. The patient will be scheduled, a patient visit calendar will be written, fee slips filled out, services recorded, payments recorded, billing information recorded onto billing forms, insurance tracking logs created, SOAP’s written, narratives written, collection letters written, promotional letters done, and so on. Older software programs can only handle a tiny portion of this paperwork logjam. With this volume of work to be done for each and every patient, you have to make absolutely sure that no individual part of the mountain of paperwork takes more than a few seconds.

If Dr. A asks Miss CA to call Blue Cross and follow up on every bill that should have been paid by now, how long will this take? If it takes longer than two seconds to get the information, it is too long. If Dr. A needs to find out who came in today that somehow got out of the office without scheduling a future appointment, can you get the information in a matter of seconds? Can SOAP’s be easily printed that correspond with the bills? Can the bills be sent without hours of paper shuffling? If you answer any of these questions with a No, then you need new more powerful software.

Recently, I performed a survey of several offices. I got the doctors and CA’s all together in a room and asked them if they wanted to see more patients. They, of course, answered that they did.

I said, “Are you sure?”

The answer was, “Of course!”

Then, I moved the doctors and CA’s to separate rooms and asked the CA’s again, “Do you really want to see more patients?” And, after a little prodding, the answer I got may surprise you.

The answer was, “No, we can’t keep up as it is! There is just too much paperwork to deal with.” Add to this the demands of the impending HIPAA implementation, and you can see the problem.

You will either expand or shrink. You don’t want expansion to be stopped because your CA’s are overloaded. The solution to the paperwork logjam can be found in new full-office-management software programs. There will be an investment in time and money, but the returns can be simply amazing.

For more information, please contact Derek Greenwood, Designer of The Practice Solution 2000, EON Systems, Inc., or call toll-free 800-955-6448.