
Managing Your Schedule is Vital to a Successful Practice

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Of the many ways that a manager can contribute to a practice's success, the ability to manage the physicians' time is the most important. The time of your physicians, advanced practice providers and other billable providers is, ultimately, your practice's most valuable asset. In addition to a revenue opportunity, billable time — the direct contact with a physician or other provider — is exactly what patients want.

The key to maximizing billable time is to proactively manage the schedule. There's more to it than just dividing each hour of the clinical work day into slots for patient appointments and then filling them. Smart strategies to get the most out of the schedule may include predictive booking – smart overbooking, in other words. For example, it may be possible to book a well-woman physical that requires initial nursing time alongside an established patient with an acute problem. Once you complete the established patient encounter, the patient who has presented for the well-woman exam will be ready for the practice professional.

The strategies change according to specialty, of course. If you're managing a surgical practice, it's vital to take your surgical yield into consideration when constructing your schedule. If you want 8 cases a week, but your surgical yield is 50 percent of all new patients, then you need to book at least 16 new patients in your office schedule. Of course, you'll also want to account for your scheduled-but-not-arrived rate by adding a handful more, to cover no-shows and cancellations. Apply this same concept to your practice, switching out the "surgical yield" for your desired outcome.

The math is simple, but these basic scheduling concepts are business critical for successful medical practices.

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