20 Ideas to Help Increase Efficiency

By Lynn Homisak, PRT

AAPPM
AMERICAN ACADEMY OF
PODIATRIC PRACTICE MANAGEMENT

10 Maple Street, Suite 301
Middleton, MA 01949
978-646-9091 978-646-9092 fax office@aappm.org www.aappm.org

20 Ideas to Help Increase Efficiency!

by Lynn Homisak, PRT

Part of the enjoyment of doing what I do, is continuously finding ways to do it better, easier and more efficiently. The other part is having the opportunity to share this information with other offices. Here are some concepts that help manage my time at work as well as organize my work space, resulting in overall better efficiency and productivity. Some of it you may find useful, others may not be applicable. Some will be new, others you may already be doing with great success. Some may be useful just the way they are, others may need some tweaking to fit your needs or may provide just the spark you need to lead to the development of something much more rewarding! Take from them what you will. If you are interested in any of the forms I mention, send me an email (lhomisak@aappm.com) and I'll be sure you get a copy. Alfred Nobel (of "Nobel" Peace Prize distinction and inventor of dynamite) said, *"If I have a thousand ideas and only one turns out to be good, I am satisfied. "* I suppose the same could be true for me even though the odds are somewhat reduced; for if out of these 20 you get only one, sharing them would equally be worth my while.

1. Always stay one step ahead. Take the time to review each patient chart BEFORE the day starts (recommend the day before) and prepare what you need in advance. Check for referral expirations or insurance benefits for anticipated procedure (orthotics?.). Are x-rays, pre-op paperwork, labwork, MRI, etc. results ready?
2. Be habitual with collecting co-pays "up front;" Routine protocol helps keeps things organized for you…and your patients! Train your patients to follow YOUR policies….don't let them train you!
3. Make phone calls to insurance companies at a time of the day when there is little interruption (The earlier in the day the better as "earlier: has less phone traffic)
4. Call (or email) all patients (the day before) to remind them of their appointments. This helps to control no shows and frees up valuable time for other potential patients.
5. Standardize your scheduling … consider using electronic scheduler to maintain scheduling consistency.
6. Keep an alphabetical card file available with your most commonly written prescriptions so staff can write them for you…PRN
7. Get a 20 second reminder feature (that beeps every 20 seconds while a patient is left on hold) installed on the hold button of your telephone to monitor the time patients are left holding.
8. For ease in weeding out inactive charts, date them. Apply a "year (2003)" sticker to the outside of each chart to indicate patient was seen in that corresponding year.
9. Have a pre-designed (color) sheet to help guide you when calling insurance companies to verify benefits. Make sure it includes all pertinent questions and try to get as much info as possible in one call. (form available)
10. Make the most of your technology! Use your computer (e.g. Microsoft Outlook) programs to organize and store all contact information, such as PCP's, facilities, suppliers, colleagues, etc) for easy access and easy recall. (Perfect for preparing mass mailings (such as announcements) to patients or local physicians)
11. Organize your x-ray films with color coded dots and coordinate colors with dates for a quick match. (eg, if you took x-rays on 10/1/03 and another set on 10/10/03, you can distinguish between the two by putting a yellow dot on the top edge of each 10/1 x-ray and a

corresponding yellow dot with the date on the folder. The x-rays taken on 10/10 would have red dots and a different color for each date after. When you open the folder to retrieve x-rays for a certain date, you only need focus on the color dot that corresponds to the date shown on the folder.)

12. Prepare an outline that will guide the assistant in obtaining more specific information from a new patient than just the complaint they've indicated on their registration form. This will save the doctor time in creating a thorough history and physical assessment. (form available)
13. Organize and control your orthotics flow and Diabetic Shoe dispensing by keeping a list of all patients, including phone # where they prefer being called (sometimes it's not their home #).
14. Mail new patients (or allow access to it on your website) a registration form which they can fill out ahead of time and bring in with them or mail prior to their appointment. Saves at least 15 minutes with each new patient! (form available)
15. Be consistent in your training by standardizing your methods. Have these written down along with job descriptions in an Employee Procedures/Office Manual
16. Organize inventory supply and know exactly when it is time to re-order frequently dispensed items (e.g. DME products) by using a system which automatically "counts down" items for you by simply checking them off. (form available)
17. Use downtime wisely to prepare disposable pre-packaged sterile P&A packs, post-matrixectomy and casting kits – ready to go!
18. Keep a daily (DATED) telephone log to record ALL messages that come into office; This is used as a means of documentation, a reliable reference, a "to do" reminder and it reduces clutter. (replace those sticky notes!)
19. Have a special note that you use routinely (eg, call patients insurance to check for orthotics coverage before next visit)? Add it to your fee sheet so it is assured attention & proper follow-up. (This sheet should not be filed away until the note has been addressed)
20. If you are unable to display all your IOD products because of space limitations, create a poster with a visual of all your products and make available to patients interested in purchasing these items.