7 Ways to Set Up a New Physician for Success

BY JOE CAPKO
1. Structured, consistent program for physician on-boarding.

If you haven't integrated a new physician recently, it's very easy to underestimate the challenges they face in simply getting up to speed. Things you take for granted like scheduling rules, charting conventions, clinic work flow, even staff names and roles are all part of the learning process. Helping your new hire learn the ropes quickly makes them feel welcome and flattens their learning curve. Furthermore, codifying this process will help avoid your need to "reinvent the wheel" each time you add a physician.
2. Consider a mentor for the new physician

Mentoring can be both deeply fulfilling for the mentor and hugely valuable for the physician being mentored. We've seen many skills transferred to new physicians that might have taken years to acquire on one's own, such as maintaining a warm bedside manner while using the practice's EHR, navigating prior authorizations with a difficult payer, or connecting with the local physician community.
3. Provide a strong and experienced medical assistant.

As with physician mentoring, a respected medical assistant can take a leading role in getting your new physician up to speed and acclimated to a new environment. Furthermore, common problems with less experienced support staff can derail a new physician striving to increase productivity.
4. Provide adequate training and support on EHR.

In our consulting practice, we see chronic underinvestment in this area with costly and long-lasting repercussions. The physician — most expert in the EHR might be well suited to assess the new physician's readiness as well as sharing their "tips and tricks" in using the system. Incidentally, having a "tech lead" is useful in the front office as well.
5. Marketing to build the physician's business.

This is another commonly underestimated requirement in getting physicians fully utilized in their new position. We often find that administrators haven't done the analysis of what it will take to get and keep the new hire's schedule full and profitable. Furthermore, new specialists can benefit from introductions and coaching on how to present their specialties to referring physicians through local medical associations, hospitals, and community groups.
6. Lay out clear compensation goals in the physician contract

This is another area where potential problems can be headed off. Although it takes an initial investment in time and energy to distill your expectations, it's essential that you communicate on this subject as precisely as possible. No lawyer or boilerplate contract is going to reduce the importance of this step. We see practices where new additions cause a decrease in profitability — it's not unheard of that a new junior physician will be highly compensated than the shocked physician owners simply because of errors in this compensation formula.
7. Hold regular medical team meetings

For some practices, especially if they're bursting with patients, it might be tempting to simply throw a new physician into the mix and hope for the best. In most cases, this approach is a mistake. We've heard from many doctors entering new practices that they value being part of a larger team with senior physicians with whom to confer. This small investment is an obvious benefit to patients, but it's also a wonderful way to build a sense of loyalty and heartfelt appreciation in your new team member.