



REVIEW



Not Your Usual Practice Management Manual

Mark A. Crissman, MD



Dr Crissman

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Medical practice management books can be frustrating. When I read them, I frequently finish them with a long list of unanswered questions. I presume my colleagues have the same reaction. If you are starting a practice, then you are already overwhelmed with questions. If you are already in practice, you are living with unanswered questions.

I have yearned for a book with specific answers, and finally we have one! *Medical Practice Management in the 21st Century: The Handbook* does more than just answer questions. Each chapter begins with a list of important questions that are then answered. Not only do the authors guide the reader through the questions and answers, but they provide very detailed worksheets to help the reader work through his/her own solutions.

This book provides excellent insight into the necessary components of a medical practice: practice organization, financial management, human resources, quality improvement, and compliance. For each of these components, the authors explain the importance and provide specific examples and solutions to common problems. They present the information in a clear manner that makes sense to medical professionals not trained for the business world (and that would be most of us).

An example of the book’s clarity that I particularly like is the comparison between a business plan and the scientific method with which physicians are familiar. Quoting from the book, “A business plan should not be a foreign concept to physicians since it closely resembles components of the scientific method. A business plan

forces management to create a hypothesis for a business strategy, to evaluate the underlying assumptions, and determine the fiscal market and non-market steps that are needed to make the strategy successful.” The book then outlines an easy-to-use format that allows the reader to fill in the blanks. The reader is thus led from an explanation of the need for a plan to an understanding of the plan itself, with examples and a format for executing the plan. The authors offer detailed solutions for developing, using, and carrying out a business plan. In summary, they tell us to use a business plan:

1. as a guide to help make decisions;
2. as a checklist to measure progress (as a road-map of sorts);
3. as a recruitment tool;
4. to obtain financial support;
5. to match job descriptions that are consistent with the practice’s stated goals.

Here’s another example of the way in which the book helped me. When I look at practice management books, I am usually tempted to skip over the chapters on marketing. Because I have a very busy practice, I have never thought it was necessary to “market” my practice. As I read this material, however, I discovered that marketing involves much more than my perception of it as an ad in the newspaper. Satinsky and Curnow point out that, “You may like to think your patients judge you solely on the quality of care that you provide, but in truth, they scrutinize your processes for delivering care and your workflow as carefully as they assess the clinical services they receive. They also notice the information technology to support your practice—ie, your practice management system, your Web site, electronic health records, e-prescribing, and the integration among all these applications.” I realized that, unknowingly, I have “marketed” my practice everyday without the use

of conventional advertising, but with every interaction that I have with my patients.

In the chapter on human resources, the authors provide a specific list of questions for the interview process, but they don't stop there.

They explain what questions not to ask and why, helping the reader to understand important legal requirements.

The book goes well beyond recruitment and provides information on employee orientation, managing retention, and handling departures from

the practice. Most books stop with the recruitment process and never address the other important issues.

One of the best features of this book is the appendices. I know how frustrated I have been when I have spent time reinventing the wheel. This book contains important tools such as patient satisfaction surveys, performance evaluations, job checklists, and forms for assessing vendors of electronic health records. You can use the forms in the appendices and on the companion Web site by inserting your own practice name and copying or modifying the text.

What truly sets this book apart from other practice

management books for physicians is that it does not stop with having developed a plan. It offers powerful practical and useful strategies for implementing a plan, even in established practices such as mine. Having

successfully taken over and guided my father's solo family practice after his retirement, with the number of employees rising from two to 13 and with two nurse practitioners now supporting my practice, I honestly felt that another practice management book would

be of little benefit to me. Marjorie Satinsky and Dr Randall Curnow have written a book that offers more than the average practice management manual.

Whether you are considering starting a new practice or are a part of a large, well-established practice, the *Medical Practice Management in the 21st Century: The Handbook* is an essential tool that will help you practice the medicine for which we have been trained.

Dr Crissman practices at Crissman Family Practice in Graham, NC.

*Medical Practice Management in the 21st Century:
The Handbook*

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[Introduction, appendix, list of Web appendices, index]

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