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November 15, 2016

Independent Study and Mentorship

Research Assessment #7

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Subject: The Business of Pediatrics- Office Staff

Source(s):

"The Business Of Pediatrics." *Healio.com*. N.p., n.d. Web. 15 Nov. 2016.

<<http://www.healio.com/pediatrics/news/online/%7B22a915c4-e344-44b3-a9d9-698ccafd8c3a%7D/the-importance-of-crosstraining-your-staff>>.

Analysis:

This article describes the importance of having an efficient and productive office staff in a pediatric healthcare office. The staff members addressed include the doctors, the nursing personnel, secretary and the receptionists, office managers and the occasional office administrator. Each of these staff members has his or her own specific duties, and they are all equally important in the successful functioning of a pediatrician's office.

Nurses are staff members who do a lot more than expected in ensuring that each patient is taken care of before seeing the doctor. Nurses weigh and measure patients and

take their blood pressure. In addition to this, they keep rooms clean and stocked with supplies, and keep inventory of vaccines.

While the secretary or receptionist generally stays in the front office, there is still a substantial role that he or she plays in the pediatric office. Secretaries and receptionists answer the phones, schedule appointments, and collect co-pays. These front office staff members are responsible for answering patients' questions with accuracy and efficiency.

Office managers play an important role as well. They train the front staff, order supplies, regulate staff scheduling and payroll, and communicate with an office's affiliated computer companies. Office managers maintain an office's website and update the patient email list. These staff members essentially ensure that employees in the office are doing their jobs properly.

Something that I found very interesting was the fact that an office manager was immensely important in the operation of an office. Many people from the outside are not aware that the role of an office manager is essential to a pediatric office, but in reality this individual plays the huge part of making sure that all employees are being efficient and accurate in their job duties.

Reading this article was interesting because it opened my eyes to the behind-the-scenes processes that go on in a pediatrician's office. To patients, it may seem that a pediatric office only consists of the secretary, who picks up the call, and the pediatrician, who diagnoses and treats any illnesses. However, this article revealed the intricacies and the complex structure that is required to ensure that a pediatrician's office runs smoothly and efficiently.

I am now very aware that an understanding of the business aspect of running a healthcare office is increasingly important, especially with the growing numbers of private

practice offices opening in today's day and age. A pediatrician must know how to operate and finance a business to be able to bring his or her healthcare services to the maximum potential.

The importance of crosstraining your staff

May 29, 2013

Unless you have a “super staffer” who can take co-pays, give two vaccines, run a strep test and reschedule a follow-up visit – all at the same time – you need a staff. We typically think of the staff as the doctors, the nursing personnel, secretary/receptionists, office managers and the occasional office administrator, each with their own areas of expertise but who should be able to perform other functions within the office.

The nursing staff needs to weigh and measure the patients, take their blood pressure and if the patient is in for a sick visit, take a history. But it doesn't stop there. They have to keep the rooms clean and stocked with supplies, and keep an inventory of vaccines, chart which vaccines have been given to the patient, enter that information into appropriate registries, discard the vaccine supplies into the proper medical waste units and keep track of the waste itself. They also need to give the patients or their families' forms to complete, including developmental screenings such as the M-CHAT.

Nurses are also responsible for any testing done in the office, blood counts, urine analysis, cultures, etc. If the lab work is being sent out they have to complete those forms. However, your nursing staff can take on some of the front office duties such as filing, answering the phones and scheduling appointments.

Your secretary/receptionists need to answer the phones, schedule appointments, collect co-pays and if a check is presented review that it has been signed as well as notifying the patient of past monies due. If the family wants an explanation they should be able to provide that information. Verifying insurance status is of the utmost importance as well. With new

patients they need to ensure that all information is completely answered. They are also responsible that patients over the age of 18 years old have signed confidentiality release forms.

While the front staff should not have direct “hands on” contact with the patients, they can escort the patients to the rooms, complete laboratory forms and be a chaperone if needed. They can be trained to perform vision and hearing screenings as well as administering Impact testing.

Office managers are essential to train the front staff, order supplies, perform staff scheduling and payroll, as well as serve as a liaison to your computer companies. A crucial function of this position involves comparison shopping on supplies, phone services, waste disposal, etc. They should be responsible for updating your website and maintaining a patient email list. Depending on the size of the office, office managers could also be called upon to review your EOBs for errors and contact the managed care organizations to correct them, keep track of your accounts receivables and collections.

Regarding office administrators, suffice it to say that they would ensure that the staff continues to operate smoothly and doing their jobs properly. They might have oversight on high level managed care dealings.

Last but not least are the doctors. some practices might divide responsibilities between doctors—one for staffing issues, one for financial issues, one for long range planning etc. depending on the size of the practice some will need a board and some will also need a managing partner.

— **Richard Lander, MD**, is a pediatrician in private practice in northern New Jersey and is a member of the *Infectious Diseases in Children* Editorial Board. He is co-chair of the Pediatric Initiative at the Atlantic Health Care System and clinical assistant professor of pediatrics at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey in Newark, N.J.