From the President and CEO

COACH’S CORNER

Your people make the difference between good and great patient care

The business of healthcare can be daunting — so many pending and pressing regulations; so many reporting requirements; so much to plan for, prepare for and do to ensure high-quality patient care. As practice managers, you are at the epicenter of that activity. Although systems are integral to the success of care delivery, it is people who truly make the difference between good and great care, patient satisfaction and a positive patient experience. Too often these two pieces of the pie — patient satisfaction and experience — are lumped together, yet they are different measures, as we learn in this issue’s Data Mine column (published online at mgma.com/virtual-data) and during our Patient Centered Medical Home (PCMH) Program, April 21-23, in Chicago (mgma.com/coach-april-pcmh). Patient satisfaction commonly refers to the care received while the experience relates to every encounter a patient has at your facility. It includes communication, respect, environment and more. Learn more in a 2010 Health Affairs article and on the Institute for Healthcare Improvement website.

This issue, which is dedicated to our Quality Management domain in the Body of Knowledge for Medical Practice Management (BOK), covers some of the systems that lead to effective health-care delivery and help ensure patient safety. I remember going through the ACMPE Fellowship program and being impressed that the BOK is created and reviewed by our colleagues in practice, who are experts in the field and know what it takes to succeed. It is a foundational pillar to practice excellence that helps ground us in the realities of daily work. There is a difference between book learning and practical know-how, and that is illustrated in the BOK. To patients, that difference should be seamless; we help you ensure that it is.

Spheres of influence

You are responsible for creating effective and efficient processes for scheduling patient appointments, disseminating test results, ensuring good patient communication, maintaining positive morale for staff and providers … and the list continues. That responsibility is multitiered and relies on many staff members to implement your mission, vision and values on a daily basis. To ensure consistency, staff must embody your providers’ passion to offer the best patient care possible and must strive to exceed patient expectations. The process starts on the phone or online, extends to the waiting room and culminates in the exam room. As a doctor, I realize just how important these frontline people are to the success of a practice. They reinforce your effort to make patients feel valued and cared for when they walk through the door, safe in your exam rooms and confident in their providers’ advice.

At a time when we are more focused on quality measures, redefining what “quality” means to your practice — and how you quantify it — has a direct effect on your success. What we learn from our Government Affairs team is that 2013 is a linchpin year for quality reporting programs, and it is imperative that you devise a game plan that works. This is the last year for you to qualify for a 0.5 percent e-prescribing bonus, but it is also important to stress that what you do — or don’t do — this year will affect your payment in the future. The government will use data from this year to assess participation, penalties and more, which is one reason I encourage you to read the MGMA Washington Connexion e-newsletter weekly and to call our experts in Washington, D.C., with questions. Our Member Community is also a wonderful resource to discuss the challenges you face and to highlight your creative problem-solving skills. The posts and lengthy conversations prove that although no one size fits all, we can learn valuable lessons from each other’s experiences with quality reporting and take advantage of shared practical tools that make group practices successful.

By Susan L. Turney, MD, MS, FACMPE, FACP

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At the heart of it, life is a continuum of memories — personal and human. To perpetuate a rich and healthy life requires a smarter healthcare system where population and individual data flow like water. Greenway delivers human data where and when you need it, leading to better, more informed decisions and enhanced patient care. From a single EHR to a complex enterprise system, let’s create a smarter health system together. For Sarah, for Walter, for your practice. For life.

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SARAH
age 4
DOB: 03/05/2008
Existing conditions:
Asthma
Notes:
Broke wrist at age 3 playing with siblings; healed well with no complications.

WALTER
age 72
DOB: 07/27/1940
Existing conditions:
Type 2 diabetes
Notes:
Committed to daily walks to maintain weight.
Recently retired.

All data is human data.

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champion the need to tie practice investments to patient outcomes. It helps tell a complete story, which features you, the practice management professional, in a starring role.

In a recent presentation to the Healthcare Financial Management Association (HFMA), I listed three quantifiable quality measures that reflect critical success factors in our practices today: quality, outcomes and patient satisfaction. The links among those three factors are you, the processes you create and the people you hire to implement and maintain them.

I also told the audience that successful healthcare organizations will have skilled leaders who use comparative data to present actionable information, pursue community alignment and always put their patients first. It's a message that I deliver to many audiences, and I cherish the opportunities to hear success stories, such as the North Shore-Long Island Jewish Health System in New York that looked inward to improve its systems.

To identify areas of vulnerability, you need data, and that’s one way we support you. Check out the “Benchmarks and Industry Data” tab at mgma.com to get the latest and greatest news from our crackerjack Data Solutions team. We just wrapped up another successful Virtual Benchmarking Academy with more than 1,000 attendees who gained insights about the data available in their practices and how they can use it more effectively. From benchmarking basics to optimizing staff, this on-demand webinar offers tips and tools for achieving greater efficiencies to practice professionals at all levels.

And although we must focus on the practical elements of healthcare, we also know that, at the end of the day, our main responsibility is to ensure that providers deliver the best patient care possible. We provide the infrastructure that makes it possible for providers to focus on patients, connect the dots between healthcare facilities, facilitate effective communication and ensure safe delivery of patient health information.

Our sphere of influence as practice professionals continues to expand as we seek new ways to take better care of patients, develop more collaborative relationships with payers and engage in the ever-changing environment of healthcare delivery. The government continues to release information about its e-health initiatives to engage patients and their families in the healthcare process. We know that this type of engagement enhances compliance and feeds a groundswell for change. The question is how to accomplish it and I’m looking forward to hearing more about what has worked for you at the PCMH Program. We know a team approach is essential to patient care and that this team extends beyond the walls of your practice setting.

Foundations for excellence

Now that I have a year and a half under my belt here at the Association, I see a greater need to tout the impact practice administrators have on quality patient care. You will hear me talk regularly about the spheres of influence for our profession and point out how many people you affect — from the inner circles comprising physicians and patients to the outer circles comprising community and payers. New models of care will continue to redefine your role, which is why it is increasingly important to identify and communicate the value you bring to the table.

At a recent State Leaders meeting in Denver, Jeb Shepherd, MGMA Government Affairs representative, told the audience, “Our greatest strength on the Hill is our members,” and I heartily echo that statement and encourage you to do the same and recognize the strength in your organizations. It is one thing to say it is the people who make the difference in an organization’s success, but we know this is true for patients. The more we realize how every process affects their health and well-being, the more we live up to their expectations and increase our value in their eyes.

Although we are all unique, have different titles and work in myriad environments, we are all patients at some point in our lives. We all want to know that our medical professionals — and the people who enable them to deliver the best possible care — have our best interests at heart.

In my opinion, that is the true measure of quality.

Notes:
