

Physician's Money Digest®

Personal Finance

Investing

Retirement

Practice Management

Lifestyle

Columns

Author

View Column >



Ed Rabinowitz

Columnist

Every individual needs regular physical health check ups. Likewise, physicians and medical practices need to consider financial health check ups. To accomplish the latter, the Financial Health Check Up column provides physicians with pertinent, useful news and information from both a personal and practice management perspective.

Prepare Your Practice for the Upcoming Flu Season

Oct 20, 2014 | FINANCE > Financial Health Check Up



When it comes to preparing your medical practice for the upcoming flu season, the key to success is being proactive, not reactive. A proactive approach means a more efficient and productive practice. And as Keri Peterson MD, knows, there's not much you can do once the horse is out of the barn.

"We generally do the Lysol and the Clorox wipes on the doorknobs and the spray of the rooms all year long," Peterson explains. "But in terms of being more aggressive about cold and flu with the Cold-Eeze and the masks—we start all that September 1st. Everything we do is designed to educate, to protect, and to prevent."

EMAIL SIGN



All Specialties

[News](#)

[Conferences](#)

[Videos](#)

[Journals](#)

“We have to protect ourselves in case a patient comes in demonstrating flu symptoms,” she explains.

Signs with various flu- and health-related messages are also posted around the office. One sign informs patients about different flu symptoms to be aware of, thus educating even those who come to the practice for wellness visits. There are also signs hanging at the entrance to every exam and waiting room encouraging patients to vaccinate.

Hand sanitizers can be found in every exam and waiting room.

“We teach patients. We have signs up also that say, ‘Cough into your elbow,’” Peterson says. “And we educate our patients. If I see a patient who’s coughing when I walk into the room, I will ask them, ‘Please cough into your elbow,’ and teach the patients.”

Along those lines, staff wears pins that say, “Who needs the flu vaccine? You do,” as a reminder that everyone is a candidate. Then once patients receive their flu shot, they get little arm stickers saying “I got my flu shot today.”

Peterson also makes sure to have rapid flu kits on hand so that she and her staff can diagnose patients through a swab in the nose when they come in; a diagnosis at the time of their visit that’s accurate, rather than just making a

EMAIL SIGN



All Specialties

[News](#)

[Conferences](#)

[Videos](#)

[Journals](#)

They stock up on masks, and if a patient is suspected of having the flu, if they can't be quickly quarantined in a room away from other patients, they're asked to wear a mask while in the waiting room.

Masks are also available for staff.

"I will mask if I'm walking into a room where there's a suspected case, so that I don't become contaminated.

Purell in every room, and disinfectant wipes also help reduce the spread of germs. Peterson and her staff wipe down the doorknobs before and after every patient who is sick exits a room. That way, the next patient or staff member who opens the door isn't touching a contaminated surface.

Peterson also keeps a large supply of Cold-Eeze in the waiting room.

"If a patient demonstrates a sign of a cold, they can grab a package, a two-pack," she explains. "The zinc in the formula will fight the cold and it will cut the duration of their cold. So if anyone is coming in early on enough in their illness, they can get started on it right away, and then we'll advise them to go buy some when they leave."

Of course, Peterson stocks up on flu shots as soon as they become available.

EMAIL SIGN



All Specialties

[News](#)

[Conferences](#)

[Videos](#)

[Journals](#)

practice,” she says. “There have been seasons where the flu shot come out a little later than we would have liked, and that was definitely a bind for us. We wound up having to refer patients to pharmacies, which were well stocked.”

The right mindset

Peterson says that perhaps the most important element in preparing her practice for the flu season is that staff are all of the same prevention and education mindset.

“We rely on our staff to implement the proper measures for sanitizing the rooms,” she says. “If they don’t that leaves every single one of us, and our patients, susceptible. Thank goodness we’ve had our staff long enough to know that we’re all germaphobes, and we are very diligent. We know the protocol.”

\$vacMongoViewPlus\$ \$vAR\$

EMAIL SIGN



All Specialties

News

Conferences

Videos

Journals

VIDEOS

Peer Exchange

Insights

Practice Brief

Practice Brief

Affordable Care Act

Personal Finance

Investing

Retirement

Practice Management

Lifestyle

Columns

ONCLive

OTCGui

Pharmac

RareDR

Specialty

Targeted