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Chicago Hospital NewsSM and HEALTHCARE REPORT

THE REGION'S MONTHLY NEWSPAPER FOR HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS & PHYSICIANS

PROFILES IN LEADERSHIP



Dr. Anthony Rinella

Local Surgeon Awarded International Humanitarian Award

The Scoliosis Research Society (SRS) presented Anthony Rinella, M.D., who is on staff at Silver Cross Hospital, their most prestigious humanitarian award: the Walter P. Blount Humanitarian Award at their international meeting in Chicago. This honor is awarded annually to only a single member internationally, who has provided outstanding service for those with spinal deformities, through their generous actions out of a sense of service to larger social and professional goals. Dr. Rinella is the only surgeon in Illinois to ever receive the award.

The Walter P. Blount Humanitarian Award was given to Dr. Rinella for his outstanding work with SpineHope (www.spinehope.org), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that performs global outreach to indigent children with complex spinal deformities in South America.

Dr. Rinella is co-founder of SpineHope, which partners and works alongside with local physicians to provide state-of-the-art treatment to children who otherwise may not receive modern treatments for their complex spinal problems. Together they correct spinal deformities, remove pain, and often prevent paralysis and extend life. Dr. Rinella is the medical director of the trips, and to date has completed sixteen week-long outreach trips. Through SpineHope and other nonprofits, he currently travels 3-4 weeks per year to treat the underserved, and sponsors young surgeons and ancillary staff using his own funds.

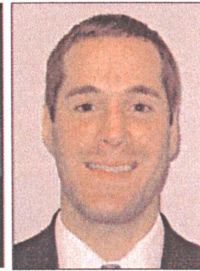
LEGAL UPDATE

Preparation of a Physician for a Deposition

It is a given that when an attorney prepares a physician for a deposition, more than one session with that physician must take place. In fact, a number of sessions is advised. During those sessions, the attorney and the physician, whom he or she represents, should meticulously and comprehensively cover the medical record that the physician made regarding the patient. In addition, a thorough discussion of the probable deposition testimony must be covered.

Notwithstanding the specific case, a few general guidelines are applicable when a physician gives a deposition. The first guideline is that the physician must tell the truth. By advising the physician to tell the truth, the attorney is not attacking the integrity of the physician. Rather, the attorney must advise the physician to not put a "spin" on the testimony. For example, if the physician wrote x in the record but x meant to mean y, the physician should never testify that he or she did not write x in the record. The physician should merely explain that even though he or she wrote x, x was meant to be y. A practical reason for telling the truth is that the truth comes easy. In other words, one does not have to think about a truthful response.

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BY JOHN M. STALMACK, AND CRAIG A. HOFFMAN

Building a Physician Alignment Strategy That Works

BY PHIL DALTON

Today there are more hospital-owned physician groups in America than there are physician-owned groups. With this trend continuing to accelerate and no end in sight, it's interesting to note why this is taking place, what it means to the marketplace, and what forward-thinking hospital leadership can do to effectively compete in this new reality.

For many new physicians, going into solo practice is no longer the attractive option it once was, particularly in those markets with heavy managed care penetration. Without the support of an IPA (Independent Physician Association), MSO (Management Services Organization) or medical group, independent physicians don't have the muscle of infrastructure to negotiate favorable contracts and reimbursement rates with payers. Absent such contracts there simply is not enough private pay to make a practice profitable, let alone to help pay off the enormous loans that often accompany medical school graduation. In addition, new independent physicians are often overwhelmed just thinking about the challenges that accompany the start-up of a practice including back-office technology needs, HIPAA paperwork and many other tasks that are not direct patient care.

While joining another large physician-owned practice may help address some of these issues, physicians today are looking for more than mere sustainability. Not, by and large, the entrepreneurial risk takers their fathers were, today's physicians seek stability, a guaranteed income and a more balanced lifestyle.

At the same time that physicians are wrestling with these issues, hospital leaders are looking

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Phil Dalton

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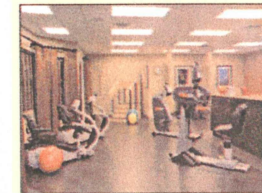
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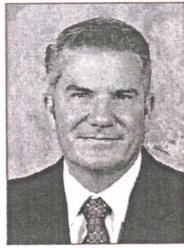
Successful Automation Requires the Right Partner

Medical practices today are faced with greater and greater demands to operate more proficiently and to blend quality patient care with an efficient "back-room" operation. For an increasing number of physicians and other healthcare professionals, this balance can best be achieved through the intelligent use of technology. And fortunately, many technologies are available at little or no cost.

Electronic tools designed to help you run your practice more efficiently include electronic claims submission, which allows you to get paid quicker; eligibility checking for verifying a patient's insurance standing; and clinical messaging, which reminds you at point of care of the recommended clinical procedures. These systems help enhance patient care while making practices run smoother, more efficiently and more profitably. When combined with the right electronic health records system in place (one that is comfortable to use, cost-efficient and has received "meaningful-use" designation), it's easy to see how technology is having a positive influence on the world of healthcare.

The key is to find the right partner to help you on this journey and allow you to maximize all of the benefits that 2012 technology can bring. Here are ten things to look for in a partner:

1. A clearinghouse and practice management system that encompasses (among other functions) billings and accounts receivables. Your system should allow you to easily and accurately enter diagnosis and treatment information and produce a claim that is sent off to a clearinghouse that will flag any mistakes and then pass it



BY BRIAN O'NEILL

on to the appropriate payer. Handling your billings in this manner will significantly reduce your time and expenses as well as the time it takes for you to get paid.

2. A company that understands the importance of integration and can provide everything you need under one seamless umbrella. One of the biggest errors a practice can make is continuing to process some functions on paper while others (such as charts, for example) convert

to being handled electronically. Don't make this mistake. An integrated model allows everyone to see all the information needed to track every aspect of office flow, including calendars, benefit information and accounting. The more an office can do electronically and the more integrated the practice, the higher the likelihood of success. The right partner will know this.

3. One point of administrative contact.

4. A thorough understanding of the importance of having the correct ancillary tools, such as a tablet PC, voice recognition and handwriting recognition. If, for example, you are accustomed to handwriting in charts, purchasing a tablet PC that allows for writing notes into the system will greatly reduce potential problems and will make the transition that much easier.

5. Continuous innovation. While it is important to get up and running today, it is equally important that your partner will continue to serve your needs as new technology comes to market.

6. Support tools that are compatible with both a PC and MAC environment so that you can access all of these services through whichever platform you and your team feel most comfortable.

7. The ability to provide customizable solutions aimed at helping you increase revenues; speed collections; and support all aspects of your computing platform, network and staff members.

8. Patience. All change, even good change, comes with an inherent set of frustrations, challenges and hiccups. If your partner understands this and will help you through the process, your chances of success increase dramatically and the frustrations will be short-lived.

9. An unfaltering commitment to customer support through a call center staffed with knowledgeable representatives and perhaps even an onsite training facility for those who want to avail themselves of that service.

10. A track record of success, and enough critical mass to be able to deliver what they promise. Today's challenging economic climate allows little margin for error or a long learning curve. You need a partner who has a broad and deep understanding of healthcare's issues, language, textures, political environment and sensitivities. And someone who can view these realities from both a provider and payer perspective.

Choosing the right technology partner will make your life easier, your patients better served, your office more efficient and your practice more profitable. With the right combination, everyone wins.

Brian O'Neill is president and CEO of Office Ally. For more information, visit www.officeally.com.

The Resource Guide

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Cover Story: Preparation of a Physician for a Deposition

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However, telling the truth does not mean that the physician must testify against himself or herself. When asked whether he or she complied with the standard of care, the response must unequivocally be affirmative. Conversely, if asked whether he or she deviated from the standard of care a response must unequivocally be negative.

The second guideline is that the physician must be counseled to pay attention to the question asked. If the physician answers a question, it is presumed that he or she understood it. However, if the physician is unclear about the question, the physician has a right to bring it to the opposing attorney's attention. Thereafter, the opposing attorney will most likely then ask what is unclear about the question or the attorney will rephrase the question to make it understandable to the physician.

The third guideline is that the physician should be counseled not to volunteer information. If a question cannot be answered by simply saying yes or no, less is best. An elongated narrative will usually result in testimonial harm to the physician or educate the opposing attorney to

explore new avenues.

The fourth guideline is that a physician should be counseled that it is permissible to answer a question that he or she "does not know" the answer to the question or "cannot remember" in response to the substance of the question. However, those responses of "I do not know" or "cannot remember" should be kept to a minimum because of the many sessions that have taken place regarding the specifics of the case as discussed by the attorney and physician.

Finally, the physician should be counseled that if his or her attorney objects to a question, the physician should remain silent. Proper objections during the course of a deposition go to form of the question and proper foundation for the question. In addition, if the question involves a privilege, it is permissible for the attorney to instruct the physician not to answer the question. If so instructed, the physician should follow the attorney's advice and refuse to answer that question.

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