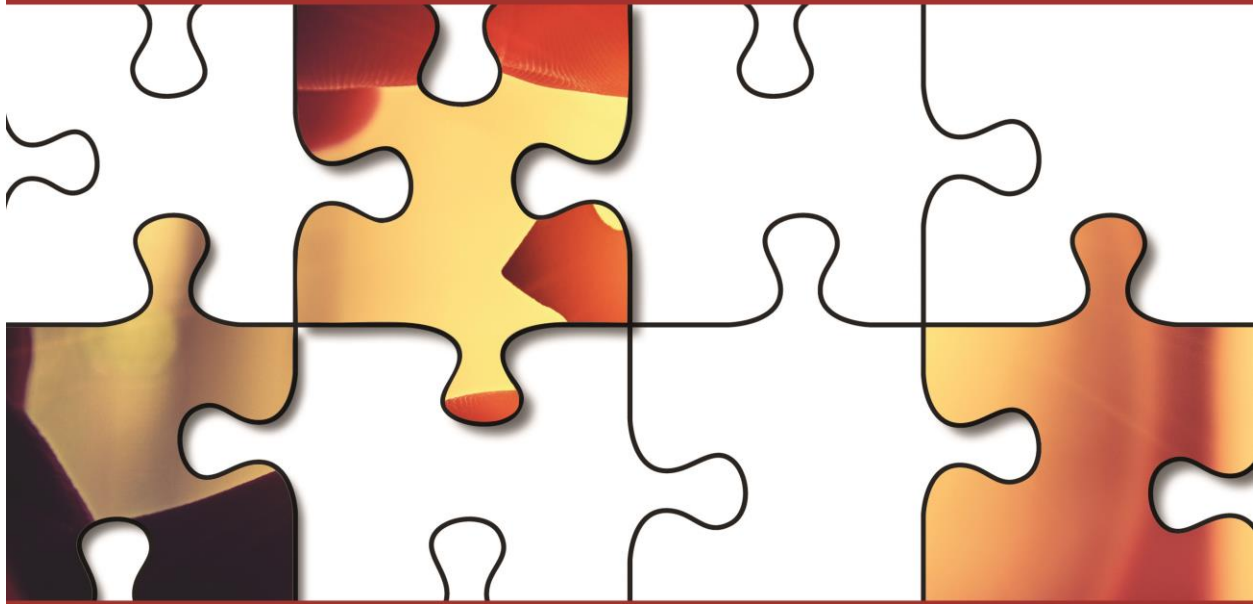




PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER: PREPARING FOR 2016 GI REIMBURSEMENT



Implement Practice Efficiencies

Paying close attention to your practice's efficiencies can keep your business operationally and fiscally healthy. Just as you monitor the vital signs of your patients, assessing and monitoring key operational aspects of your practice will help you better understand the status of your practice's financial health. Implementing practice efficiencies will ensure you have a handle on your profitability in order to determine the best way to move forward into 2016 successfully.

Five Tips on Implementing Practice Efficiencies

1. ***Assess the efficiency of your office processes***

With reduced reimbursement and increased overhead costs due to compliance, profit margins are not what they used to be. Now more than ever, practices need to focus on operational efficiencies as a way to increase profit margins. Practices should continuously look for opportunities to improve the productivity and effectiveness of their clinical and administrative operations. Changes to office policies and protocols should increase practice profit margins without sacrificing your patient satisfaction. Implementing improvement processes in your office is a team sport and involves every member of your team including clinical, reception, scheduling, and billing staff. Ask staff for recommendations on how office protocols can be changed to streamline processes. Routine tasks and internal check lists are important for keeping good practices in place. Eliminating ineffective processes will provide more time for your unit to generate revenue or enhance your patients' experience. Rethinking the practice space, staff responsibilities and patient experience can bring immediate changes to your practice. Units performing at the top of their capabilities help to keep staff, patients, and providers satisfied and working together as a team.

Resource

- ASGE Video Tip: [GI Practice Operations](#)

2. Improve your patient flow

Healthcare managers have long been aware of the importance of having a smooth patient flow throughout the office visit or procedure. Effective patient flow not only saves time and money, it gives the patient a satisfactory experience. With poor communication, patients' experience can be negatively impacted before they physically enter the office.

Upon visiting your office, the patient encounter should be positive from your waiting area to the check-out. At the beginning of the encounter, close attention should be paid to how long the patient is waiting. Keeping a patient informed of the steps involved in his or her visit will help make the patient feel comfortable and respected during the entire encounter. Patients should leave their visit feeling that the time they spent with their provider was maximized and all of their concerns were addressed. Use a patient satisfaction survey as a tool to improve the patient experience and improve your operations.

Resources

- [ASGE Sample Patient Survey](#)

3. Understand your staffing ratio to provide support to the provider

The cost of staffing your GI practice is the largest line item in your budget. Using your staff to the top of their job descriptions, capabilities, and scope of practice will not only save the practice money, but will allow smart use of your resources. You should be assessing and adjusting your staffing levels regularly based on the office schedule. It may be important for the practice manager to shadow clinical and administrative staff to ensure that they are working at their maximum capabilities.

Understanding the consequences of over-or under-staffing is an important factor in controlling additional costs in your practice, such as overtime. Creating and updating staff job descriptions provides staff with the expectations of their roles and responsibilities. Knowing the average full time equivalence (FTE) of staff per provider for your office helps realize the best use of resources. According to MGMA, medical offices may use between 4.43 and 5.24 FTE's for total support staff per physician, based on the practice volume. How staff is allocated can best be determined by your office volume, procedure mix, revenue expectations, and patient flow. You may consider rethinking your staffing models and work flow to optimize staff throughout your office operations.

Resources

- **ASGE Video Tip:** [The Hidden Cost of Overtime](#)
- **GO2014 Presentation:** [Office Efficiencies: Optimal Staffing](#)
(GI Outlook is cosponsored by ASGE and AGA)
- **ASGE Course:** [Practice Management 101](#)

4. Prepare for the patient visit by using pre-registration and insurance verification prior to the visit

Assigning staff to pre-register patients prior to the visit will allow for a faster check-in process. You may even consider moving the check-in and check-out process to the exam room, if possible, to save space and time. It can take 15 minutes of staff time to register every new patient and up to five minutes for an established patient. This time can be better used by your front office staff for other tasks. Verifying insurance coverage and knowing the patient's payment responsibility ahead of time

will improve the checkout procedure. Collecting payments at the time of the office visit will eliminate unnecessary staff time in billing and accounts receivable procedures. Onsite payments provide the best opportunity for your office to collect the patient's portion of the claim.

5. *Ensure good communication with the patient at all times*

Communication is the key for patient satisfaction, and having pleasant and well-trained staff helps. Your staff has the first and the last contact with the patient and the patient's family. The contact can be by email, telephone or in person. Staff must be trained to understand that patients are there to be helped and may not be feeling their best that day. Empathy and compassion will go a long way to show the patient he or she is valued and important to you. Staff must present themselves in a professional and positive manner to help encourage communication with the patient. After the patient leaves your office, the encounter may not end. Communication may be necessary to inform the patient of test results, schedule other visits with the same or a different provider, or discuss post visit instructions. Make sure there are open communication vehicles for the patient to be able to contact the provider and staff. You may want to consider having a dedicated staff to return phone calls and emails, or to communicate through a patient portal. Keeping informed on the patient experience is vital to the health of your practice.