When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, comprehensive medical staff training took a back seat to crisis management. But now timely and relevant training is returning to the top of the agenda for physician private practices, for new and continuing staff.

“The COVID health pandemic caused a lot of disruptions, less time, more things to do,” according to Geoffrey Kass, director of Medline University, a division of Medline Industries that provides high quality, evidence-based continuing education courses at no cost to medical professionals.

“New staff lacks proper onboarding education and current staff hasn't participated in reinforcement training in quite a long time,” Kass said. “So, a lot of practices are looking for ways to get back into good routines of standardized education and training.”

Offerings on HIPAA, personal protective equipment, communication and cultural awareness, fire safety and more join the training agenda for private practices, Kass said during an episode of “AMA Update” in which he detailed the value of ongoing private practice staff training.

Advice to get training on track

Training has evolved during the COVID-19 pandemic, Kass said. Even though the federally declared COVID-19 public health emergency expired in May, many physician private practices have faced challenges getting back on track.

“The first thing is access to get currently updated, clinically sound educational resources and courses—finding that content in the first place. It takes time, clock hours to kind of source that all out, vet it, make sure it's the quality you need for your practice,” he said.
A second major challenge is budget. “A lot of practices don’t have big budgets for training and education, unlike some of their acute [care] partners. The big hospitals often have much larger budgets than smaller practices,” Kass said.

Kass offered several tips for rebuilding a training schedule, including expanded use of technology. Training programs should be hosted online for ease of access.

“Learners should be able to find what they need very easily—using robust keyword systems, great filters and categories. That content should be easy for the practice members to find,” he said. “Most importantly, the content should be engaging. It should be interactive. It should be fun. It should be a more enjoyable way to learn. That helps improve the retention of that information for the facility members.”

Medline University has more than 250 courses available, with about 160 eligible for CE credits. The self-paced courses allow staffers to start, stop and continue where they left off without losing their previous work—an important feature for busy practice teams.

Medline has curated a course list specially for AMA members. It is a service provided to AMA members in addition to the AMA Medline Buying Program.

There is zero cost for AMA members to enroll in the Medline Buying Program and enjoy access to a hand-picked CE course list, staff training and education through Medline University as well as:

- Up to 20% savings on all purchases.
- Next-day delivery and low order minimums.
- Medline’s extensive apparel program.

It takes astute clinical judgment as well as a commitment to collaboration and solving challenging problems to succeed in independent settings that are often fluid, and the AMA offers the resources and support physicians need to both start and sustain success in private practice.

Find out more about the AMA Private Practice Physicians Section, which seeks to preserve the freedom, independence and integrity of private practice.

New topics your staff should know

Online training systems should also have tools for the administrators.

“The administrators should be able to make course bundles and student groups, track the progress and run any reports that they may need for their own record keeping. Those are the important
considerations when you’re examining digital tools,” he said.

What new topics should practice administrators add to their training agenda, beyond the traditional basics?

“Emergencies, emergency preparedness, violence in the workplace. Those are all very current topical subjects that most health care facilities are reviewing for their staff. The last couple of years have been tough,” he said. “Also, cultural awareness, serving the needs of diverse populations, and frankly, anything with technology—telehealth, equipment, EMRs.”

“AMA Update” covers health care topics affecting the lives of physicians and patients. Hear from physicians and experts on public health, advocacy issues, scope of practice and more—because who’s doing the talking matters. You can catch every episode by subscribing to the AMA’s YouTube channel or the audio-only podcast version, which also features educational presentations and in-depth discussions.