How doctors can quickly boost their private practices’ efficiency

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Squeezed on seemingly all sides by demands for their time and intellectual energies, physicians in private practice have precious few moments to set aside for management. But as life in contemporary private practice becomes progressively more challenging, many doctors have no choice but to find efficiencies wherever they can.

That is where AMA Private Practice Simple Solutions come into play. The rapid-learning cycles are designed to give physicians opportunities to implement actionable changes that can immediately increase efficiency in private practices. The program is free to all private practice physicians.

Some of the program incorporates content and resources developed by the AMA for other educational programs but tailored to the needs of private practice physicians, according to Taylor Johnson, AMA manager of physician practice development and part of the program development team.

“The AMA has a lot of really great resources on efficiency and sustainability. We will take some of the existing content and do a deep dive into the processes that are most important for physicians in private practice,” she said in an interview.

You took care of the nation. It’s time for the nation to take care of you. It’s time to rebuild. And the AMA is ready. The AMA Recovery Plan for America’s Physicians is rebuilding critical components of our profession by:

- Fixing prior authorization.
- Leading the charge to reform Medicare pay.
- Fighting scope creep.
- Supporting telehealth.
- Reducing physician burnout.


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Doctors to learn from each other

In addition to previously prepared content, the series will incorporate new material developed by experienced physicians and subject-matter experts, Johnson said.

Each eight-week learning session will focus on one topic area. Private practice physicians will be able to access pre-recorded content presented by subject-matter experts based on their individual availability. Recordings will be released in week one and week six.

Running concurrently to the release of the pre-recorded webinars will be a discussion board, offering participants opportunities to interact with fellow cohort members and submit questions to the subject-matter experts who oversee the sessions.

“The community of private practice physicians spans multiple time zones and different kinds of schedules, so it is impossible to get everyone to attend at the same time. The asynchronous learning model allows everyone to participate in discussions when they can,” Johnson said.

Pre- and post-session surveys will measure the relevance of the topic, adoption of content and impact of the sessions. The surveys will also allow participants to suggest topics to be covered in future sessions.

The first session was released earlier this month, building on the AMA STEPS Forward® E/M Documentation Burden Reduction Toolkit. The session, led by Jeannine Engel, MD, University of Virginia associate professor of medicine, covered evaluation-and-management (E/M) guidelines, using the new outpatient E/M codes, engaging key players, and educating physicians and staff.

After the session, participants were invited into asynchronous discussion at the AMA Physician Innovation Network to talk about the relevance of the initial presentation and content. These discussions allow participants to discuss the content with the subject-matter expert and learn from each other’s experiences, Johnson said.

The second online seminar will be released Aug. 16 and feature a moderated discussion with the subject-matter expert to cover questions and issues raised in the online discussion and include a presentation of two case studies of successful implementation. Participants will also be able to interact with the subject-matter expert through the discussion platform and ask follow-up questions.

More sessions this year

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The AMA plans two more asynchronous classes this year, focusing on team documentation and physician recruiting issues, according to Johnson.

“This program is really the first of its kind for private practice physicians,” she said. “The program allows private practice physicians to connect with their peers and give them access to information and training that those who are not part of a large health system may never have.”

Another great tool is the “AMA STEPS Forward™ Private Practice Playbook” (PDF), which highlights key messages and provides links to free online toolkits, videos, podcasts, and practical tools to start creating change today. The playbook is designed for physicians who are aspiring to open or enter a private practice, practice managers or operations leaders.

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.