3 ways to cut private practice burdens and create more patient time

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Many physicians are drawn to private practice because they see it as an avenue to have long-lasting relationships with patients and have more control over the patient-physician experience. It’s also an opportunity for physicians to have responsibility for the care team and administrative staffing.

But how does a physician set up a practice with efficient operations to ensure they have the extra time with patients they desire, and in a way to prevent the physician and health care team from becoming burned out by administrative burdens?

The “AMA STEPS Forward® Private Practice Playbook” (PDF) helps physicians answer those questions, guiding them on how to set up their private practice in a way that allows them to provide personalized care for their patients while minimizing some of the headaches that contribute to burnout.

Reducing physician burnout is a core element of the AMA Recovery Plan for America’s Physicians. 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.

Nearly 40% of U.S. physicians experience burnout. The AMA develops resources that prioritize well-being and highlight workflow changes so physicians can focus on what matters—patient care.

The 63-page AMA playbook was designed knowing that new physicians get little exposure to private practice settings and serves as a resource to help aspiring independent physicians make up for this gap in training by providing tips on how to start, maintain and grow a private practice. It contains physician-developed strategies for practice managers and physicians on deciding whether private practice is right for you, attending to business and growing your practice.
Here are three areas from the playbook that can help reduce burdens while delivering high-quality care in private practice.

Select and adopt the right EHR

One innovative problem-solving opportunity is to select and adopt the right electronic health record.

“The best time to minimize the burden is when implementing a new EHR system,” the playbook advises. “It is always best to set defaults to the most efficient team-based approach early on and adjust them as needed after using the system.”

The playbook offers a chart explaining core EHR considerations, as well as links to AMA STEPS Forward toolkits that can further guide physicians in making the best choices, including EHR software selection and purchase, EHR implementation and getting rid of stupid stuff.

Increase practice efficiency

By creating a private practice that is efficient, physicians and their teams won’t waste time, energy, attention and money on things that don’t add value for the patients, the playbook says. It also creates more satisfaction for physicians and the health care team.

To increase practice efficiency, the playbook connects physicians with toolkits to schedule patients more effectively, develop a culture of lean health care, implement pre-visit planning, establish advanced rooming and discharge protocols and streamline patient pre-registration.

Transition to team-based care

Physicians can better connect with patients and stay focused on their primary care tasks when they have the help of their other team members. Through team-based care, team member collaboration and pride in their work, efficiency and patient satisfaction are improved.

The playbook explains the elements of successful team-based care and connects physicians with toolkits on daily team huddles, team documentation and transitions of care.