

THE MESSENGER



Valley Baptist
Valley Health Care Network

SEPTEMBER 2009

Message from the Interim Executive Director

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This newsletter comes to you packed with information and opportunities for you and your staff to enhance the skills and knowledge necessary to maintain success in today's health care world. We hope you find the information in our newsletters to be helpful and worthwhile.

This month our emphasis is on education and its importance in helping your practice stay current with the changes in our industry and to help your staff and your practice be as successful as it can be. Providing your staff with educational opportunities to improve their skills provides you with great return on your investment and shows them you value their work and loyalty to your practice. And, all the sessions are held here locally, so you don't have to pay any travel expenses! Be sure to review the article on Page 2 by Nancy Clements from the Practice Management Institute and the upcoming schedule of educational opportunities on Page 8 of this newsletter.

Make an investment in your staff and your practice by sending at least one of your staff to an upcoming session. It's a win, win situation!

Yours Truly,
Pam Magouirk

VHCN Staff:

Pam Magouirk
Interim Executive Director

Debbie Muñoz,
Executive Secretary

Erin Hodgson, *Provider Relations Coordinator*

Lola McShan, *Provider Compliance Coordinator*

The Managed Care Dictionary

Terms you should know...



Managed Care

A general term for organizing doctors, hospitals, and other providers into groups in order to enhance the quality and cost-effectiveness of health care. Managed Care Organizations include HMOs, PPOs, POSs, EPOs, etc.

THE EXPERT CORNER

Staff Training Strengthens Bottom Line for Valley-area Physicians

By: Nancy Clements
Director of Communications
Practice Management Institute

Physician reimbursement and compliance challenges continue to consume valuable practice resources. The key is building a team of knowledgeable staff trained to handle the latest business hurdles. It is a constant challenge to stay on top of compliance regulations, Medicare updates, managed care contract selection, new codes and third party payer rules. Yet, physicians must address these business concerns head-on in order to maintain a profitable practice. Now more than ever, a qualified staff, properly trained to deal with these issues is an essential component of a successful practice.

Doctors need solutions that don't disrupt the practice patient flow or break the bank. PMI classes, held in Brownsville and Harlingen, teach physicians how to keep cleaner records, train medical office administrators how to better manage personnel and financial issues, and even show receptionists how to effectively handle appointments and patient relations.

Physicians in the Valley have access to affordable staff training conducted several times a year by Practice Management Institute (PMI). These programs, hosted by Valley Health Care Network, provide important coding, billing, compliance and office management training for physician staff in our area. PMI is nationally known as a leading authority on coding, reimbursement and compliance issues that affect the profitability of the medical practice. These continuing education classes have been offered in Brownsville and Harlingen for five years. Certifications in coding, insurance processing and office management are also offered periodically. With increasing federal regulations on the horizon, pressure to maintain a qualified staff will become more important.

PMI has found that people are more receptive to learning in a live classroom environment

rather than web-based or audio classes. Instructors travel to local communities and stand in front of class participants.

"Our trainers are seasoned professionals with a love for teaching and enthusiasm about the subject matter," said Douglas W. O'Dell, President and CEO of PMI.

PMI's Professional Services Department consistently researches and updates educational materials based on legislative and Medicare alerts. Workbooks are reviewed at least quarterly and printed on demand.

For 25 years, PMI has presented well over 30,000 practice management workshops for doctors and their staff. In 1991, PMI introduced its first credential. Today, it maintains three certifications for medical office professionals, earned by more than 14,000 individuals in the U.S. and abroad.

We are all painfully aware of today's reimbursement and compliance challenges. Finding trained staff to effectively manage these tasks has become increasingly difficult. Valley Health Care Network is dedicated to helping medical office professionals improve their skills.

"Ongoing communication, training, and evaluation are essential elements that will help build and retain a motivated staff. It is a sound investment that will lead to increased productivity, enhanced job satisfaction and staff longevity," said O'Dell. "If we're doing our job properly, then physicians will have a well-qualified pool of professionals to keep them compliant and help maintain proper reimbursement," said O'Dell.



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M A N A G E M E N T
I N S T I T U T E

FTC Grants Three-Month Delay of Implementation of 'Red Flags' Rule Requiring Adoption of Identity Theft Prevention Program

(The focus of this article is on the small medical office provider, the "Red Flags Rule" and how to implement the program.)

By: Lola McShan

As you have probably already heard, the FTC is delaying enforcement of the Red Flags Rule until November 1, 2009 to give "small businesses and other entities more time to develop and implement written identity theft prevention programs."

The FTC also announced that it will "take another look at its efforts" to educate small businesses and other entities about compliance with the Red Flags Rule. The FTC anticipates creating a special link on the FTC website for small and low-risk entities, with guidance and direction regarding compliance with the Red Flags Rule. See www.ftc.gov/redflagsrule. This response from the FTC is a result of the House Appropriation Committee's request that the FTC defer enforcement for health care providers and small businesses that have a low risk of identity theft problems.

Protect your patients, protect your practice: What you need to know about the Red Flags Rule:

The Red Flags Rule requires many providers to implement a written Identity Theft Prevention Program to detect the warning signs or "red flags" of identity theft in their day-to-day operations. Focusing on red flags now, will help to spot an imposter using someone else's identity to get products or services from you. "But does this rule apply to my small practice?" The Rule applies to you if you provide products or services and bill customers later. To find out if the Red Flags Rule applies to your business, read ***Fighting Fraud with the Red Flags Rule: A How-To Guide for Business***, a booklet published by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC).

The FTC, the federal agency that enforces a number of consumer protection laws, has designed a compliance template to help providers at low risk for identity theft design their own Identity Theft Prevention Program. It has two parts: **Part A** to help you determine whether your organization is at low risk, and **Part B** to help you design your written Identity Theft Prevention Program if your organization is in the low risk category.

PART A: Is your organization at low risk for identity theft?

How can you tell if your business is at low risk for identity theft? Conduct an assessment. You have to consider the unique characteristics of your organization. Here are some factors to help you decide your risk level.

1. Do you know your clients personally?

Maybe you're a doctor on Pease Street and you are familiar with everyone who walks into your office. It's unlikely that an identity thief can defraud you by impersonating someone you already know. That would place your practice at low risk for identity theft.

2. Do you usually provide your services at your customers' homes?

To avoid getting caught, identity thieves tend to move around a lot. They generally don't want people to know where they live. If you regularly provide services at your patients' homes, your practice may be at low risk for identity theft.

3. Have you ever experienced an incident of identity theft?

You've been in practice for some time now, and no one has complained that someone stole their identity and used it to get products or services at your practice. That might suggest your business is at low risk for identity theft.

(Continued on pg. 4)

If there are no reports in the news and no talk among people in your profession about identity theft, your organization may not be the target of identity thieves, and your organization may be at low risk for identity theft.

PART B: Designing an Identity Prevention Theft Program for Low Risk Practices involves four basic steps:

STEP 1: Identifying relevant red flags

STEP 2: Detecting red flags

STEP 3: Responding to red flags

STEP 4: Administering your Program

The **first step** is to identify the red flags that signal that people trying to get services from you aren't who they claim to be. Read the FTC's free booklet ***Fighting Fraud with the Red Flags Rule: A How-To Guide for Business*** (pages 19-21) for examples. For instance, if you check photo IDs, a classic red flag of identity theft is an inconsistency between the person's appearance and the information on the photo ID. If you know all your customers personally, it's probably not necessary to ask for a photo ID, and this red flag wouldn't be appropriate. Sometimes, the only red flag may be a notice from another source that an identity theft has occurred.

The **second step** is to explain how your practice will detect the red flags you've identified. For example, perhaps in Step 1 you identified false IDs as a red flag. To detect a false ID, you might consider training your staff to look carefully at the ID to see if the person's appearance is consistent. What if somebody notifies you that an account has been opened or used fraudulently? To make sure those notices don't fall through the cracks, you may require employ-ees to log that kind of notice in a central place or to tell a staff member responsible for responding to red flags.

The **third step** is to decide how you'll respond to any red flags identified. For example, say you've identified the risk of false IDs as a warning sign of identity theft, and you've noted that you will train your staff to look for inconsistencies in identification. Your employee has checked the photo ID and detected an inconsistency. What's the next step? You may ask for another form of identification – or maybe not providing any products or services until the inconsistency has been resolved. Imagine you're trying to collect on an unpaid bill, and the person you contact tells you his identity was stolen and he didn't run up that bill. Although it will depend on the circumstances, consider how you might respond. You could ask for proof that an identity theft claim has been filed.

The **last step** is documenting how you'll administer your program. Here's what's involved:

Describe how you will train your staff. List the categories of employees who will be trained to detect red flags. Decide how your reception staff, the people who handle your billing and how they'll get that training. Will it be during an orientation for new employees or an annual update?

Identify how you'll supervise your service providers. Do you use service providers who might detect the red flags you've identified? Do you hire a company to handle your invoicing or use a collection agency to collect overdue bills? Talk to them to see that they're following your program or have their own that complies with the Red Flags Rule.

REFERENCES:

FTC- Federal Trade Commission
AMA- American Medical Association
PMI-Practice Management Institute

Welcome New VHCN Members !

May - August 2009

Stephen Busby, M.D. (Neurology)
956-389-6565
Harlingen

Cristel Escalona, MD (Pediatrics)
956-994-6572
McAllen

Ricardo Schwarcz, M.D. (Pulmonology)
956-428-2030
Harlingen

Gaylyn Holstein, M.D. (Psychiatry)
956-698-4705
Brownsville

Juan Briones, PA-C
Sesame Family Clinic - Harlingen
956-423-8042

Nina Torkelson, M.D. (Family Practice)
956-389-2440
Harlingen

Michelle Cash, PA-C
Sesame Family Clinic -Harlingen
956-423-8042

Beverly Zavaleta, M.D. (Family Practice)
Brownsville
956-698-5040

Congratulations!

Valley Health Care Network would like to recognize and congratulate the following medical practices for receiving a score of 100% on our credentialing office site surveys. These clinics demonstrated compliance by meeting the required criteria recommended by various regulatory standards such as NCQA, OSHA, HIPAA, and the VHCN managed care insurance companies. These practices will be presented with an acknowledgement certificate for medical office safety and privacy standards. The clinics will also be listed on the VHCN website and acknowledged at the VHCN Board of Directors meeting.

The following clinics are recipients of the first 2008-2009 award.

Homero Aguilar, MD
Henry Benavides, MD-Harlingen Women's Health Clinic, LLC
Luis A. Gonzales, MD
Thomas Huff, DO
Tanya Jalil, MD
Matt Loewen, DO-Sesame Family Clinic
Vahid Mirafazali, MD-Boys & Girls Pediatric Clinic
Valley Doctors Clinic
Valley Diagnostic Clinic
Beverly Zavaleta, MD
Cesar Costa-Luna, MD-San Benito Kids Clinic
Brian O'Donnell, MD & John Partin, MD-Family Practice Associates
Jose Cohen, MD-Valley Women's Clinic
Allan Spence, MD-Spence Clinic
Luis Reynoso, MD
Uvaldo Cantu, MD & Ruben Torres, MD-Harlingen Obstetrics & Gynecology Associates
VBMC Family Practice Residency Program
Roseller Tapangan, MD
Su Clinica Familiar
Womens Health Specialist
Diana Lozano, MD & Stephanie Garcia, MD-Valley Medicine Associates
George Toland, MD-Valley Children's Clinic and Night Clinic
Juan Maldonado, MD, Robert Holder, MD, Jason Peters, MD



New Medical (Nonsurgical) Weight Loss Center in Harlingen

A novel preventive health initiative has been undertaken in Harlingen with the opening of a medical weight loss center, **New Zoë Medical Weight Loss and Nutrition Center**. Obesity is an epidemic in this country and particularly in our community. Our medical community is well aware of the numerous co-morbidities seen in the overweight (BMI >26) and obese (BMI >30) patients including diabetes mellitus, hypertension, dyslipidemia/coronary artery disease, congestive heart failure, obstructive sleep apnea, arthralgia/degenerative joint disease and certain forms of cancer.

According to recent epidemiological studies, over 60% of the adult population in the US is either overweight or obese. This is particularly true of the Rio Grande Valley where these percentages are much higher, especially in our Hispanic community. New Zoë is a comprehensive medical weight loss center that emphasizes long-term weight loss by a gradual but permanent life modification. These include individually customized diets based on metabolic profiles/co-morbidities, exercise regimens, weight loss medications (where necessary), cognitive/behavioral aspects of weight loss and above all, education.

We have to address this urgent public health issue in a concerted manner. We believe that we have developed an excellent, state-of-the-art program after about a decade of treating the obese and their co-morbid conditions. We are also working with Dr. Ashraf Hilmy, who has operated the Bariatric Surgery Center at Valley Baptist Medical Center - Harlingen for several years.

Obesity is a problem with deep cultural, socio-economic and political barriers. A simple example would be the high glycemic index foods that we encourage in our homes and school cafeterias. This happens in spite of the high prevalence of diabetes mellitus type II in our community. Educating and informing the public is a responsibility that the entire medical and educational community should share. We are in the process of establishing a consensus between the sectors of health care, education, media, and community leadership to actively address the obesity issue in the Rio Grande Valley. Valley Baptist Health System has been involved in

preventive health for decades and will now be in the forefront of these efforts.

New Zoë is not a primary care endeavor but a center specialized in the management and treatment of obesity. Primary care physicians and specialists who refer patients to us can be assured that they will receive periodic reports on the progress of their patients. Although we will monitor the co-morbidities as we treat obesity, patients will be referred back to their PCP for management of any primary care issues that may arise.

Brochures on the services and products are available with a phone call to the office at 956-423-9963. We will be happy to deliver them to your offices. Currently, we are taking patients by appointment only, so please have your patients call our office to schedule an initial evaluation.

Contact Information:

New Zoë Medical Weight Loss and Nutrition Center

1733 S 77 Sunshine Strip, Suite C
Harlingen, TX 78550
1-866-2New Zoë
956-423-9963
www.newzoe.com



Medical Director:

Edward G. Oorjitham, MD
Board Certified Family Medicine
Member of the American Society of Bariatric Physicians
Member of the Obesity Society

IMPORTANT ALERTS!

Online classes this Spring!

UTB will be offering Medical Terminology & Office Procedures classes online
Spring 2010!

For more information please contact
Mary Valencia, CPC, CMC, CMOM
Assistant Master Technical Instructor
Applied Business Department
University of Texas at Brownsville / Texas Southmost College
956-882-7478 (office)
mary.valencia@utb.edu (email)

VA Update

When submitting claims for payment the VA has determined that the taxonomy code is **NOT** required on the claim form, only the NPI.

Don't Miss the Upcoming Office Manager's Luncheons!

September 15, 2009 @ 12p.m.

Valley Baptist Medical Center—Harlingen
Woodward Conference Room

September 17, 2009 @ 12p.m.

Valley Baptist Medical Center—Brownsville
Tower Conference Room

Please RSVP to Debbie Muñoz or Erin Hodgson at 389-6742.

Upcoming PMI Seminars

Harlingen

September 18, 25, October 2, 9, 16,
Certified Medical Coder (CMC)
8:00 am to 4:00 pm
\$999
Program #13983-0918



Brownsville

November 4, 2009
Insurance Processing
9:00 am to 12:00 pm
\$149
Program #13840-1104

CPT/E&M/ICD-9 Coding
1:00 pm to 4:00 pm
\$149
Program #13841-1104

Call 800-259-5562 or visit www.pmiMD.com to register or for more information on these programs.

**“WE ARE TRULY YOUR
MESSENGER.”**

THE MESSENGER

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Harlingen, Texas 78551

Phone 956-389-6742
Fax 956-389-6769

[http://www.valleybaptist.net/
services/professionals/vhcn/](http://www.valleybaptist.net/services/professionals/vhcn/)

