



## **Provider Responsibility** **By James L. Holly, MD**

Every healthcare provider – physician, nurse practitioner or physician assistance – is expected to practice excellent medicine in a professional manner, which includes:

1. Avoiding the use of profane or crude language in the presence of patients, employees or partners. This is not a religious decision; it is simply a decision of common decency. “Locker room talk,” as inappropriate as it is in the locker room, is unacceptable and intolerable in the work place.
2. Maintaining and keeping a schedule, which is the first element of our contract with our patients. Every doctor should know that when he gives a patient an appointment, he enters into a contract with the patient to see that patient within a reasonable time, which routinely should be "on time." If you fail in this initial and fundamental aspect of the patient-physician contract, the patient will grow to have little confidence in your ability to keep the other aspects of that contract.
3. In addition to maintaining a schedule, every provider should be committed to seeing patients when they wish to be seen and when that is not possible to make certain that the patient’s healthcare needs are met by another healthcare provider.
4. Remembering that no matter how good your medical practice is, the patient's perception of that practice will determine your success. We each have a personal commitment to practicing quality medicine based on our character, but it is equally if not more important, for the patient to believe that we are practicing good medicine. To this end, every SETMA provider will be attentive to his or her Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS, in-patient) and Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (CAHPS, ambulatory care) performance scores and to take steps to improve any deficiencies in patient satisfaction as a part of Patient-Centered Medical Home.

Each of these responsibilities will be done by:

- Responding to telephone calls or secure web portal messages in a timely manner. The best way to deal with a pesky patient is overwhelming them with kindness and attention.
- Dealing with the things which do not "make us money," as efficiently and as effectively as we do those things which profit us financially.
- Making sure that we initiate no therapy, which is not followed-up on in a timely fashion. Patients and/or insurance companies who pay for laboratory results and/or other tests have the right to expect that those will be used in the treatment of patient's health. This requires

healthcare providers to review all tests in a timely fashion and to communicate that review to the patient.

- Being available to our patients when they need us.
- Treating all of our patients with dignity, respect and kindness.
- Not allowing our personal business or pastimes to interfere with our taking care of patients. If a friend stops by for a visit, let him or her sit in your office until you are finished with a patient. Limit their visit to a few minutes. They will respect you more and your patients will appreciate it very much. Remember, our friends aren't making us a living, our patients are.
- Treating those patients we "don't like" with the same deference we do our friends.

Being a team player and a leader. Our employees will take their cues from the healthcare provider with whom they work, us as to how they are to work. If we cut corners, and take "the easy way out," they will, also. We set the pace of excellence by:

1. Responding daily and completely to all inquiries from our patients.
2. Responding daily and completely to all correspondence concerning our patients.
3. By making sure no one whether funeral home, home health agency, hospital, patient has to call the second time to get a response from us.
4. When possible take care of the inquiry immediately. Work left to later will become a burden and will often be neglected or will be done in a slipshod manner.
5. Supporting the other team members of SETMA, LLP by DOING OUR JOB. If our receptionists tell a patient that they will have an answer in one hour, we must support them by giving that answer in one hour, no matter what it takes to do so. This will cut down on repeat phone calls, angry patients and frustrated employees.
6. Keeping our contract with our patients by seeing them "on time" and by treating them well.
7. Going beyond what providers "normally" do in order to help our employees and our patients. When your nurse sees you doing things, which he/she normally does in order to facilitate patient care and the flow of patients, he/she will work harder. When he/she sees you just sitting around waiting to be "waited on," he/she will be tempted to do the same thing. Your patient care will suffer, and your practice will suffer. As the team leader, be aware that there is nothing, absolutely nothing, which is not your responsibility, and therefore your obligation to do, if there is no one else immediately available to do it, or if they are busy doing something else.

By following these simple principles every doctor in SETMA, LLP can increase his or her productivity, patient satisfaction and personal fulfillment.