Cash-Based Acupuncture: Creating a Successful Practice

Laura C. Bowman, MD, FAAMA
Metro Acupuncture
Atlanta, GA
Metro Acupuncture

History

- Acupuncture added to existing pain management/anesthesia MD practice in 1999
- LAc joined practice in 2001
- Evolved to exclusively Acupuncture/Eastern Medicine practice in 2002
- 100% Cash Practice since 2002
Practitioners

• Founding :
  – MD
    • Background in anesthesia/pain management
    • NCCAOM Boarded, Five-Element trained
  – LAc
    • TCM and Chinese Herbs, Five-Element trained

• Practice Expansion
  – MD
    • Background in pediatric oncology
  – LAc
    • TCM and Chinese herbs
Metro Acupuncture
Office Support

• Full time office manager
  – 7:00AM-3:30 PM M-F

• Part time office support
  – 3:00PM-7:00PM M-Th; 8:00AM-12:00PM Sat

• Duties (this is the abbreviated list!)
  – Billing and payment at time of service
  – Scheduling and day prior reminder call
  – Room turnover, stocking
  – Laundry and vacuuming (including routine needle rolling)
Acupuncture & Insurance Reimbursement

• Vast majority of medical practices participate in 3rd party insurance payment plans

• Acupuncture is inconsistently reimbursed
  – Sometimes indication specific
  – More often (as in Medicare) not at all
Cash vs Third Party Economics

• Small practice
  – typical revenue cycle of insurance filing makes managing cash flow difficult

• Personnel costs to file insurance claims
  – Increase by 40-50%

• Patient responsibility for initial payment and subsequent 3rd party transactions
  – Benefit of participation in their care at that level
Metro Acupuncture
Economic Evolution

• “Leap” from insurance based to cash based practice in 2002
  – Frightening
  – Required a shift in thinking and creativity
  – Income ultimately remained constant
  – Freeing
Key Elements

• Environment
  – Patient centered
  – Work flow conducive

• Customer Service Orientation
  – Personal communication with patients
  – Follow-up with referring M.D.’s
  – Respect for time
  – Flexibility in charge for those who cannot pay
Patient Centered Etiquette

• Punctuality with appointment times
  – Clear communication about expected duration
• Prompt phone call/email response
• Thank you notes for referrals from patients
Punctuality

• We’re on Time, So They’re on Time
• Scheduling
  – No double booking
  – Existing patients – scheduled on the half hour
  – New patients – 1 hour block
  – Pediatric patients-1 hour block
• Needles retained for 30 minutes
Rooms

- Adjustable light, comfortable beds
- Ability to seat family members
- Ability to treat in seated position
- Supply cabinet standardized from room to room
- Moxibustion considerations (ventilation, office location, etc)
- Soothing instrumental music
Rooms

1997

2009
Rooms

- Flag System
Rooms

- Bell System
Forms

• Intake Forms and Procedure Notes Suit All Styles of Practice
  – SOAP style
  – Tongue/Pulse
  – French energetics/Tan/TCM/Five Element
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**Diagnosis Codes**
- 7-29-13 729.5 - Pain in a limb
- 7-29-13 724.79 - Chronic Back Pain

**Procedures**

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**Total** $205.00

**Payments**

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<tr>
<th>7-29-2013 Credit Card</th>
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**Balance Due** $0.00

Place of Service Code: 11-Office

Anna C. Kelly, MD  
NPI 1679790209  License # GA #034824  Fed ID 56-2277152
Hours

• Open 6 days/week
  – Sunday on call coverage for fertility procedures
• Practitioners work flexible overlapping hours
  – Maximize efficiency
  – Decrease the revenue/expense differential
  – Multiple practitioners allows practice to expand beyond the clinic walls
Off-Site Practice

• Atlanta Center for Reproductive Medicine
• Radiotherapy Clinics of GA
• Hospital Consults (Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta)
• House Calls
Community Practice

• Partnering with Mental and Behavioral Health Facility
  – Mental health related therapy
  – Treat up to 10 patients for the charge of one hour of practitioner time
  – Auricular/Simple Acupuncture
Internal Marketing

• Phone/Email Screening
  – 100% return calls/response within 24 hours
• Customer Service
• Referral Tracking
Referral Tracking

- 30% Patient Referrals
- 30% Physician Referrals
- 30% Internet Search Referrals
- 10% Attendees at Presentations/Auctions
Outside Marketing

• Physicians
• Patients
• Presentations
  – Patient Support Groups
  – Physician groups, practices
• Community participation
  – Silent Auction Donations
• Media
  – Community newspapers, local TV
  – Internet
Outside Marketing

• Physicians
  – Introduction Letters
    • Scheduled By Specialty
    • Includes Letter, Case Study, and Brochure
  – Follow-up Letters
Outside Marketing

• Patients
  – Quarterly Newsletters
  – E-Newsletters
  – Birthday Cards
  – Loyalty Rewards Program, Client Tracker
  – Other software programs
Outside Marketing

• Presentations
  – Grand Rounds
  – Private Practices
  – Emory School of Medicine and Nursing
  – Support Groups

• Silent Auction Donations
Media Marketing

- Web site
- Search engine optimization
- Social media
  - Facebook
  - Twitter
  - Google +
  - Instagram
Views for the Future

• Expansion of Integrative Oncology Sites
• Other applications of community acupuncture
  – Smoking cessation, other addictions
• Expansion of hospital consultations with Pediatric Pain Team
• Exploration of role and feasibility of house-calls and concierge-type services
Questions and Answers