

# Preface

Doctors' offices have evolved from family businesses of single physicians to networks of tens and even hundreds of doctors with different specialties. The payment systems have migrated from fee for service to capitation. Consumers have become more involved in their own care, readily asking questions and desiring to be more informed. And, along with all these changes, there is the ubiquity of technology. Technology allows physicians to be geographically distant, yet in touch with their colleagues and patients. It provides for efficient documentation and payment of services. It also allows the patient to search for information on providers and conditions and to "speak" electronically with others who have the same condition.

This book describes the effects of technology on office workflow, patient registration, patient records, prescription writing, patient education, practice finances, credentialing, the management of managed care, messaging, and remote medicine. The first section, "Utilizing Technology to Arrange a Physician Visit," provides information of the technology utilized before the patient visit and includes examples of physicians who utilize e-mail and Web sites to attract patients, electronic scheduling systems that decrease waiting time, and registration systems that verify insurance information. The second section, "Utilizing Technology to Enhance the Physician Visit," demonstrates how technology is utilized when the patient is in treatment and/or follow-up care. Focusing on electronic medical records, electronic referral systems, billing and collection systems, and follow-up patient education and discharge information, the section portrays the "future physician office visit." The third section, "Utilizing Technology to Enhance Physician Practice Operations," focuses on the physician practice manager's daily operations and how technology can achieve efficiency.

Each chapter begins with ten opening questions and/or issues that are meant to stir the reader's imagination and interest in the subject. You may also wish to use these lists as mechanisms to begin discussions with your staff. Another use is to convert them into checklists for your practice. They integrate theory into practice and will be an effective mechanism for implementing the ideas in this book.

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