

Marketing Your Clinical Practice

Ethically • Effectively • Economically

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CONTENTS

<i>Foreword</i>	xxi
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xxiii
<i>Introduction</i>	xxv
<i>Contributors</i>	xxix
<i>About the Authors</i>	xxxiii

Pillar I Love the Ones You're with: Keeping the Patients You Already Have1

<i>Note</i>	2
-------------------	---

Chapter 1 Giving Your Practice a Checkup.....3

Personal Interviews.....	4
Patient Surveys	4
<i>What to Ask</i>	5
<i>Whom to Include</i>	10
<i>Customizing the Survey</i>	10
<i>Implementing the Survey</i>	11
<i>Tabulating the Results</i>	11
<i>Using the Results</i>	11

Focus Groups.....	12
<i>Invitations and Reminders</i>	12
<i>Running the Meeting</i>	12
<i>Follow-Up</i>	14
Suggestion Box.....	14
Physician Surveys	14
<i>How to Survey Your Peers</i>	15
<i>Notes</i>	17
<i>Additional Resources</i>	18
Chapter 2 Mystery Shop 'Til You Drop.....	19
<i>Notes</i>	23
Chapter 3 Don't Be Late for a Very Important Date	25
Do Not Keep Patients Waiting.....	26
Identify Problem Areas	27
Managing No-Shows	27
<i>Technology to the Rescue</i>	29
<i>Emphasize Importance of Keeping Appointments</i>	29
<i>Should You Charge for No-Shows?</i>	30
Manage Interruptions	30
Do Not Ignore Delays	31
12+ Time-Busters.....	33
<i>Notes</i>	35
Chapter 4 Identifying Moments of Truth	37
Create a Patient Cycle.....	37
What to Watch For.....	38
Don't Forget the Hospital and Outside Testing Facilities	40
Other Methods of Discovery	41
Turn Negatives into Positives.....	41
Chapter 5 Putting on the Ritz.....	43
Learning from Ritz Carlton	43
How Personal Information Notes Are Used	46



Lessons Learned from the Container Store	47
<i>Note</i>	48
<i>Additional Resources</i>	48
Chapter 6 Your Reception Area Is Your Opportunity to Create a Good First Impression	49
Avoid Negative Perceptions	50
Reconfigure Your Reception Area	51
Provide Distractions	53
Provide a Variety of Reading Materials	55
Guide Your Patients to Internet Sites	57
More About You and Your Staff	57
Other Touches	59
<i>Note</i>	59
<i>Additional Resources</i>	60
Chapter 7 Improve Patients' Drug Compliance—Provide Medication Information	63
<i>Additional Resources</i>	69
<i>Internet Sources</i>	70
Chapter 8 One-Stop Shopping: Incorporate In-Office Dispensing of Medications	71
The Patient-Physician Relationship	72
Who Can Benefit from Direct Dispensing?	73
Is Office Dispensing for You?	73
Integrating Dispensing into Your Already Busy Practice	75
Getting Started	75
Direct Dispensing: The Right Way	76
<i>Notes</i>	77
Chapter 9 Marketing on 10 Minutes a Day	79
Who Are Your Key Patients?	79
Who Comprises This Group of Key Patients?	80
Who Should Call the Key Patients?	81



What Time Should You Call the Key Patients?	81
What Are the Advantages?	82
Possible Disadvantages.....	82
Chapter 10 Different Strokes for Different Folks: Dealing with Demanding Patients.....	85
Marketing and Difficult Patients.....	86
12 Steps for Dealing with Difficult Patients.....	86
When All Else Fails—Ready, Aim, Fire!	89
Notes	89
Additional Resources	89
Chapter 11 Track Your Oldies and They Will Become Goodies	91
Additional Resources	94
Chapter 12 A Transfer Request Does Not Mean Good-Bye.....	95
Chapter 13 Build the Evidence . . . and They Will Come.....	99
Origins of Evidence-Based Medicine.....	100
How Evidence-Based Medicine Works	101
Limits of Evidence-Based Medicine	103
Evidence-Based Medicine in Your Practice.....	104
Notes	105
Additional Resources	106
Chapter 14 Leave a Paper Trail . . . That Leads to the Bottom Line.....	107
Welcome to the Practice	107
Thank You for Consulting Us.....	109
Thank You for Your Prompt Payment	109
Thank You for the Referral.....	110
Here's a New Patient	111
Your Balance Is \$0.00	112
Saw You in the News	112
Sorry About the Delay.....	113
Birthday Cards	114
Welcome to the Area.....	114
Thanks for the Compliment.....	114

Authorizations, Consultations, and More	114
Suggestion Box Replies	118
Chapter 15 Stuffers Soften the Bite of the Bill	119
Choosing Your Topics	131
Opportunity to Educate	132
<i>Note</i>	133
Chapter 16 A Picture Is Worth a Thousand Words: Creating Office Videos	135
What Are the Advantages?	135
Potential Subjects for Office Videos	137
How to Create a Video	138
Where to Show the Videos	141
<i>Note</i>	142
<i>Additional Resources</i>	142
Chapter 17 Need More Patients? Brochures Are the Cure	143
What to Include	144
<i>Introduction</i>	144
<i>Office Policies</i>	145
<i>Directions</i>	146
<i>Extras</i>	147
Production, Design, and Printing	147
Distributing the Brochure	148
<i>Note</i>	149
<i>Additional Resource</i>	149
Chapter 18 Meshing Your Disaster and Marketing Plans	151
Why Have a Disaster Plan?	152
Think the Unthinkable, Then Start to Plan	152
Protecting Your Data	153
<i>Test the Backup System</i>	153
<i>Advantages and Disadvantages of Remote Servers</i>	153
Working with Your Staff and Your Colleagues	154
Continually Implement and Test Your Plan	154
Share Your Plan with Your Colleagues	155

Starting All Over.....	155
Reboot Your Marketing Plan	155
<i>Note</i>	157
<i>Additional Resources</i>	157
Pillar II External Marketing: Attracting New Patients to Your Practice	159
Chapter 19 Your Net Worth Is Related to Your Network.....	163
Networking Shared Experiences.....	163
Alternatives to Phone Calls	165
Networking for Feedback.....	166
<i>Notes</i>	169
<i>Additional Resources</i>	170
Chapter 20 There's Strength in Numbers: Support Groups and Group Appointments Can Fill the Bill	171
Topics, Dates, and Places	172
Choosing Speakers.....	172
Getting People to the Meeting.....	173
Setting Up the Meeting.....	174
Conducting the Support Group Meeting	174
Following Up	175
Group Meetings Can Enhance Efficiency and Productivity.....	176
<i>Suggestions for a Successful Group Meeting</i>	176
<i>Getting Paid for Group Meetings</i>	177
<i>Notes</i>	178
<i>Additional Resources</i>	178
Chapter 21 Marketing to Ethnic Communities	179
Do Your Homework	180
Techniques to Attract Ethnic Groups	182
<i>Notes</i>	184
<i>Additional Resources</i>	185

Chapter 22 Closing the Generation Gaps: Marketing to Boomers, Seniors, and Gen Xers.....	187
Who Are They?	188
Marketing to Xers	188
Promoting Your Practice to Baby Boomers	189
<i>Profile</i>	189
<i>Meeting the Needs of Boomers</i>	191
Promoting Your Practice to the Mature Market.....	194
<i>Physiologic Changes of the Matures</i>	194
<i>A Lesson in Empathy</i>	195
<i>From Patient Needs to Practice Changes</i>	195
<i>Person-to-Person Interactions</i>	197
<i>Notes</i>	199
Chapter 23 Write That Masterpiece—and Send It to the Lay Press.....	201
Why Write for the Lay Press?	202
How to Select a Topic.....	202
Making a Pitch to the Editor.....	203
Doing the Hard Work.....	205
Capitalizing on Your Clips.....	206
Be Prepared for Rejection.....	207
<i>Notes</i>	207
Chapter 24 Nothing Does It Better . . . Than a Newsletter	209
Why Write a Newsletter?	210
Keep the Faith.....	212
Consider Your Options	212
Planning and Topic Selection	212
Writing the Newsletter Copy	214
Design and Promotion	215
Getting the Newsletter Out.....	216
Other Uses for Newsletters.....	217
<i>Notes</i>	218
<i>Additional Resources</i>	218



Chapter 25 They'll Find You Fast with an Effective Yellow Pages Ad	219
Getting the Most for Your Money	220
Setting Your Objective	220
Necessary Ingredients of an Effective Ad	220
<i>Start at the Top</i>	220
<i>Worth a Thousand Words</i>	221
<i>Content Is Key</i>	222
<i>Be Easy to Reach</i>	222
Size and Location Matter.....	222
<i>Should I Use Color?</i>	223
<i>Always Insist on a Proof</i>	223
What Is the ROI?	223
Specialty Directories.....	224
The Hotline	224
<i>Notes</i>	225
<i>Additional Resources</i>	225
 Chapter 26 Care and Feeding of Your Web Site: Learning	
to Love Spiders and Crawlers	227
Web Hosting Services.....	228
Selecting a Domain Name.....	229
Register Your Domain Name	230
Web Site Development—Do It Yourself or Hire a Professional?	231
Getting Your Web Page Noticed	235
Direct Marketing	236
Search Engines.....	237
Getting Traffic (or Eyes) to Your Web Site	238
<i>Pay-Per-Click</i>	238
<i>Free or Natural Search</i>	238
<i>Vendor Portals</i>	239
How Much Should This Cost?	239
To Blog or Not to Blog?	240
Measuring Methods	241

Feedback	242
<i>Notes</i>	243
<i>Additional Resources</i>	243
 Chapter 27 One Small Click for Your Patients, One Giant	
Leap for Your Practice!	245
The Stage Is Set	246
Enhance the Practice Experience	247
The Range of E-Services	248
E-Consults Gaining Ground?	250
Disease Management	251
Survey Patients Online	252
Marketing and Practice Promotion	252
Security and Privacy Caveats	253
Future of This Technology	254
<i>Notes</i>	255
<i>Additional Resources</i>	256
 Chapter 28 Go Public with Your Message: Speeches That Spur Action	259
Getting the Gig	260
Write That Talk	262
<i>Getting Off to a Good Start</i>	263
<i>Structuring Your Presentation</i>	264
<i>The Opening Pitch</i>	264
<i>Relevance and Brevity</i>	268
<i>Visuals and Props</i>	268
<i>Close with Power</i>	269
“And the Answer Is . . .”	270
Reading the Room	270
Internet Presentations	271
Final Advice	273
Expand Your Platform	273
Does Public Speaking Always Work?	274

<i>Note</i>	274
<i>Additional Resources</i>	274
Chapter 29 Make Slides That Sizzle	277
Think Visually	278
Promote Readability	279
<i>Word Count</i>	279
<i>Text Size</i>	280
<i>Graphs</i>	280
Combine Colors Carefully	280
Play It Cool	281
How Many Slides?	282
Equipment Requirements and Extras	282
Learning the Basics	283
Presentation Tips	287
<i>Note</i>	287
<i>Additional Resources</i>	288
Chapter 30 Meet the Press: Create Credibility Through Celebrity	289
Booking an Interview	290
Planning Your Presentation	291
Dressing the Part	292
Preparing a Checklist	292
It's Showtime!	292
Strut Your Stuff as a Talk Show Host	294
<i>The Advantages</i>	294
<i>The Disadvantages</i>	295
How to Get Started	296
Keeping the Show Going	298
A Few Caveats	299
<i>Notes</i>	299
Chapter 31 Become an Instant Expert: Write the Book	301
In the Beginning Is the Idea	302
Evaluating Your Idea	302

Making the Pitch	303
Researching and Writing the Proposal.....	303
An Agent or Not?	304
A Contract Is Offered—Now What?	308
Getting to Work!	310
The Book Is Written—You’re Not Finished Yet!	311
Advice About Book Promotion.....	312
Should You Consider Self-Publishing?	313
<i>Note</i>	313
<i>Additional Resources</i>	313
Pillar III Motivating Your Staff	315
<i>Note</i>	316
Chapter 32 Go for the Goal: How to Create Team Spirit.....	317
Working Together to Create Goals	317
Creating a Mission Statement	318
Constructing a Policy Manual	319
No-Cost Techniques to Motivate Staff	320
<i>Notes</i>	334
<i>Additional Resources</i>	334
Chapter 33 Add Sparkle to Your Staff Meetings	337
Types of Meetings	338
Starting on a Positive Note	338
Working Together	338
Stimulating Staff Involvement	340
<i>Note</i>	341
<i>Additional Resources</i>	341
Chapter 34 Reach Out and Touch Someone: The Telephone Is the Lifeline of Your Practice	343
Answering the Phone: A Six-Step Technique	344
Screening Calls	345
Training and Background	346

Make Every “Hold” Second Count.....	347
Triaging Emergencies and Urgencies.....	347
Other Extras to Increase Telephone Power.....	348
Notes	349
Additional Resources	350
Chapter 35 Break Bread and Break the Ice: Start a Lunch-and-Learn Program—Referrals Will Follow	351
Organizing the Luncheon	352
The Luncheon Program.....	352
Leave Your Staff Alone.....	353
Program Benefits.....	353
Chapter 36 A Match Made in Heaven: Hiring the Perfect Employee for Your Practice	355
Screening Your Applicants	356
The Interview Process.....	357
Post-hiring Recommendations	361
Chapter 37 Making Office Space Work—for Your Practice and Your Staff	363
Reevaluate and Consolidate	364
Aim for Function	365
Pillar IV Communicating with Other Physicians and Other Professionals	367
Chapter 38 How to Obtain and Maintain Physician Referrals: It Takes Patience, Persistence, Politeness, and Prompt Reporting	369
Facts of Life	385
Notes	387
Chapter 39 Generating Referrals from Nontraditional Sources.....	389
Target Your Market	391
Other Referral Sources	394
Imaging and Marketing.....	395
From Alternative to Complementary.....	396

<i>Who's Who in Complementary Medicine?</i>	397
<i>Interaction with Alternative and Complementary Healers</i>	397
An Idea That Did Not Work.....	399
Approaching Potential Referral Sources	399
Notes	400
Additional Resources	400
Chapter 40 Make the Hospital Your Marketing Ally, Not Your Adversary.....	403
Shared Interests	404
Chapter 41 Big Can Be Better: Marketing for Large Groups	409
How to Help Your Group	410
Marketing for Your Department	410
Large Group Networking.....	412
Providing Services for Referring Physicians	413
Marketing a Large Single-Specialty Practice	415
Marketing the Mayo Clinic Way.....	416
Other Ideas.....	419
Additional Resources	419
Chapter 42 Birds Do It, Bees Do It, Even Ivory Tower Doctors Do It.....	421
Making Patients Comfortable.....	422
Establishing Relationships with "Outside" Physicians	424
International Marketing.....	425
Outward Bound.....	426
Pillar V From Pillar to Post: Best Use of Consultants, Technology, and Tips to Ensure Your Marketing Success.....	429
Chapter 43 Improve Quality, Build Alliances When You Add Ancillary Services	431
Supply Chain	431
What's Involved in Adding Ancillary Services?	432
Setting the Stage.....	433
Add a Manager	433

What You Need to Know—Financial Feasibility	434
What You Need to Know—Legal Issues	436
What You Need to Know—Accreditation and Reimbursement Issues	437
What You Need to Know—Turf Issues	438
Marketing Your Ancillary Service	438
Notes	439
Additional Resources	440
Chapter 44 The EMR Difference: From Paper Chase to Service-Based.....	441
Improving Patient Service and Revenue.....	443
EMR to the Rescue	444
Write It Once and Use It a Lot.....	444
Walk-Out Plan	445
Follow-Up Contact on the Plan	445
Supporting General Care Standards.....	445
Follow-Up on Testing and Results	445
Incoming Patient Calls as an Opportunity to Inform the Patient	446
Improving Triage and Incoming Patient Requests	446
Generating Revenue.....	446
Uncovering Service Opportunities.....	447
Implementing a Marketing-Driven EMR.....	448
Select the Right Product for Your Practice.....	448
Implement the Product in an Effective Way	448
Support the Product to Maintain Effective Use and Achieve Your Objectives	449
Using a Scribe to Enhance the Efficiency of Your EMR	449
How Does the Scribe Work?	449
Advantages of the Scribe	450
How Does a Physician Find a Scribe?	450
The Disadvantages of Having a Scribe	450
Getting Started.....	450
Additional Resources	451
Chapter 45 Let Technology Simplify Your Life	453
Promote Your Practice with Computerized Patient Education Material	453

<i>What Do You Need?</i>	454
<i>The Hardware to Drive It</i>	454
<i>Software Solutions</i>	454
Education Using Web-Based Videos	458
On the Horizon.....	459
Using Automated Phone Answering Systems.....	460
<i>Selecting an Automated Telephone System</i>	460
<i>Use Options Sparingly</i>	460
Stop Playing Phone Tag with Patients	461
<i>How It Works</i>	461
<i>When Patients Do Not Call</i>	462
Upgrade to Touch-Screen Check-In	462
Online Scheduling.....	463
<i>Notes</i>	464
<i>Additional Resource</i>	464
Chapter 46 Banish the Malpractice Blues.....	465
Avoiding Suits	466
Time to Say You're Sorry?	469
10 Never-Evers of a Suit	470
Ways to Reduce Premiums.....	472
Marketing Aspects of Malpractice.....	473
<i>Notes</i>	474
<i>Additional Resources</i>	474
Chapter 47 How to Market and Promote Clinical Research.....	475
Income and Intellectual Challenges.....	476
You Must Commit.....	476
Getting Started	477
Attracting Patients to Your Studies.....	478
Create a Positive Experience for the Monitor.....	481
Future of Clinical Research	481
<i>Notes</i>	482
<i>Additional Resources</i>	482

Chapter 48 Taking the Stand: Marketing Your Expertise	
as an Expert Witness	483
Why Become an Expert Witness?	484
What Is Involved?	484
The Document, Please	485
Tips on Diagnosis	486
Other Steps	486
Walk the Walk and Talk the Talk	487
Do Your Homework	488
Do Not Let Cross-Examination Cross You Up.....	489
Fee Arrangements	490
Where the Opportunities Lie	491
Notes	493
Additional Resources	493
Chapter 49 Do Niche Marketing as a Super Specialist.....	495
The Focused Factory Concept	496
Examples of Healthcare-Focused Factories	497
Why Focused Factories?	498
Any Bad News?	499
Notes	499
Additional Resources	499
Chapter 50 Giving Our Patients a FedEx Experience.....	501
How Does the FedEx Philosophy Work?	502
FedEx and Healthcare Providers	502
Parallels Between FedEx and Physicians	503
Invite and Heed the Truth.....	503
Notes	504
Additional Resources	504
Chapter 51 Marketing Your Concierge Medical Practice.....	505
Benefits to Patients	506
What Are the Advantages for Physicians?	506
Caveats and Legal Issues of Concierge Medicine.....	507

Getting Started	508
Two Doctors' Experiences.....	509
<i>Note</i>	511
<i>Additional Resources</i>	511
Chapter 52 Hiring a Marketing Consultant.....	513
Be Ready for Your Consultant	514
Objectives	514
How to Find a Consultant	516
How Much Will It Cost?	516
Other Sources of Advice	516
Measuring Results	517
<i>Additional Resources</i>	517
Chapter 53 Working with an Architect to Enhance the Patient	
Experience in Your Office.....	519
Why Design Is Important	519
When Do You Need to Remodel?	520
How Can an Architect Help You?	521
How to Find the Right Architect.....	522
Important Dos and Don'ts	522
Saving Space.....	524
Assessing Your Space Needs	525
Consider Social and Health Trends.....	525
Pay Attention to Sustainability.....	525
Go Lean and Eliminate Waste.....	526
Appendix	527
Resources for Finding the Right Architect	527
Resources for Achieving Sustainability.....	528
Chapter 54 Medicine, Marketing, and Mirth: Having Fun with Your	
Medical Practice.....	529
Humor and Medicine Go Back a Long Way	530
Humor Starts with the Top Banana.....	530



Contents

Why Does Humor Work?	530
Humor and the Patient	537
<i>Note</i>	538
<i>Additional Resources</i>	538
Chapter 55 Lagniappe (Something Extra).....	539
Something Extra for Patients.....	539
Want Success? Remember Rolodex.....	541
Create an Idea Fund.....	541
Cultural Rewards	541
Remember Your Answering Service.....	541
Avoid Hide and Seek in the Office	542
One Way of Getting a Report to an Attorney	542
The All-Purpose Prescription Pad.....	542
Purge Office Reading Material	543
Pick Up the Phone.....	543
Something Extra for Staff.....	543
<i>Notes</i>	545
Chapter 56 Balancing Your Personal and Professional Lives	547
<i>Notes</i>	552
<i>Additional Resources</i>	552
Chapter 57 Getting Started: The Secrets of Marketing Success	553
Does Marketing Work?	555
Conclusion	557
Index	559

FOREWORD

There is no substitute for good medicine and for demonstrating caring and compassion for your patients. Today, those basics will not be enough to guarantee you a successful and enjoyable practice. It takes good, ethical marketing, and it will take exceeding patients' expectations about their health care to have a thriving, successful practice.

Our clinic has attracted patients from all over the world, and we believe this is a result of fulfilling a need of helping patients stay healthy, providing useful and current educational materials, and offering outstanding, state-of-the-art services for our patients. In addition, our clinic uses the very same marketing techniques described by Dr. Baum in this book to make others aware of our services and our expertise and to promote wellness and health habits to our patients.

Although our clinic already applies many of the marketing ideas suggested by Dr. Baum in this book, there are new concepts that we plan to implement in the near future. Regardless of your current commitment to marketing and practice promotion, I believe you will find additional ideas that you can easily, effectively, economically, and ethically implement into your practice.

Kenneth Cooper, MD, MPH

Cooper Clinic
Dallas, Texas

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Finally, I owe more than I can ever express to my wife, Linda, to whom this book is dedicated. I have had many people ask me about writing a book and I always advise them: make sure you have a partner who supports your effort, because there will be many a night, many a weekend, and even vacations when you will be compelled by your writing passion to defer gratification and work on your book and then by those deadlines to complete your project. Linda has been the kind of partner who has allowed me to work for months at a time on this book. She also has a keen eye and an interest in ethical marketing and practice promotion. I know that I wouldn't have been able to accomplish what I have in my practice and with my writing without her unyielding support. It is for that reason that the book is dedicated to her. The creation of this book is just as much Linda's as it is mine.

INTRODUCTION

This book was first written in 1992. At that time, the latest advances in clinical medicine were oral medication for treating diabetes mellitus, shock wave lithotripsy, laparoscopy, and the use of minimally invasive surgery. It was at this time that medical marketing was often confused with advertising and had a very negative connotation among physicians.

Since our *First Edition* of *Marketing Your Clinical Practice*, there have been astounding advances in medicine, including the mapping of the human genome, stereotactic brain surgery, and intrauterine fetal surgery for spina bifida and diaphragmatic hernia. At the same time, we have seen acceptance of ethical medical marketing that has become commonplace in even the most conservative of medical practices.

Today, physicians understand the importance of using marketing techniques to make existing patients knowledgeable about the services the practices offer (as described in Pillar I) and to educate potential new patients about the areas of interest and expertise of the physicians in the practice (Pillar II). We have also learned that you don't have to be a member of a large multispecialty medical group in order to market your practice. Marketing techniques are available to nearly every physician, and most marketing methods can be done with minimal and even no additional expenses or time required on the part of the physicians and his/her staff (Pillar IV). And, there's no doubt that motivating your staff—and keeping them motivated—is the key to any practice's ongoing success (Pillar III). The final section of our book (Pillar V) has lots of extras, from ideas for increasing income streams to working effectively with professional consultants.

The first few editions of this book were focused on seeing that every patient had a positive experience with the practice and that they would create a positive word-of-mouth buzz about the practice. Today we live an electronic world and we have seen the explosion

of electronics into the office practice of nearly every physician. This edition explores the use of Web sites in the marketing and promotion of a medical practice. Most patients have access to the Internet and are expecting their physicians to have a presence on the Internet. So, we've included a chapter on Web sites, by Catherine Maley, who is a national marketing expert with extensive experience in Web site development. Her chapter walks you through the steps for creating a compelling site that will generate new patients for your practice and allow your existing patients to interact with your practice online. It's a great way to improve the productivity of your practice. Updates to the chapter on interactive Web sites, by Jeff Dolan of MedFusion, allowing your patients to obtain more services from your practice via the Internet, also guarantee that your patients' satisfaction will extend beyond the four walls of your practice.

We have seen the erosion of physicians' incomes, and third-party payers are continuing to cut reimbursements to physicians. As a result, physicians are looking to find ancillary income to replace the lost income from decreasing reimbursements. Dr. William Monnig has organized several revenue streams for his urology group, including CT scanning, their own outpatient surgery center, and an incontinence center. Those practices that plan to implement ancillary income-producing revenue streams into their practices will learn the methods and techniques of adding ancillary services to enhance their bottom line.

Only 50 years ago, doctors routinely prescribed medications from their offices and even owned pharmacies within the buildings and sent patients to these pharmacies to have their prescriptions filled. Then the American Medical Association issued guidelines that precluded in-office dispensing and doctor ownership of pharmacies where patients were sent for their medications. This has all changed in the past 10 years. Now it is permissible to dispense medications for patients within the practice. Dr. Patricia Farris, a dermatologist and a sought-after expert on the subject of in-office dispensing, provides advice on how to effectively and efficiently offer this service to your patients. If in-office dispensing is a consideration for you and your practice, then Chapter 8 will be "indispensable." It thoroughly covers both the advantages and risks of this potentially lucrative service to offer your patients.

Many practices were planned and constructed several decades ago, long before computers and technology were so commonplace in the medical office. Today most offices have added new technology such as computers, servers, fax machines, printers, and electronic medical records that require a new configuration of your older space in order to make it more user-friendly for your patients and also for your staff. Mr. John Pangrazzio, an architect who specializes in office and hospital renovations, will show you by example, how to reconfigure your space to accommodate new technology, and adhere to current codes and regulations. As a result, you will be able to remake your old antiquated office into an efficient office that will not only impress your patients but will facilitate the efficiency and productivity of your staff.

The chapter on electronic medical records has been revised by Ron Sterling, one of the nation's leading experts on EMR implementation; it provides several suggestions on the implementation process as well as techniques for improving the efficiency of having an EMR in your practice. I will share with you the technique of using a scribe, which can

reduce the time spent by the doctor using the computer. It is even possible that with a good scribe and a good system, the doctor may not have to touch the computer at all and be able to spend more in-person time with the patient and still enhance the efficiency of the patient visit.

Concierge medicine is a new concept in the delivery of health care. Several doctors who have transitioned from traditional third-party payer to a concierge practice provide their experience with this novel approach to practicing medicine. Vasilios J. Kalogredis, Esq., who knows the legal issues associated with concierge medicine, provides advice for those physicians interested in developing this unique type of practice.

Since I experienced the wrath of Hurricane Katrina, I have extensive experience in disaster planning and management. I have written a chapter on preparation for a disaster, which includes not only natural disasters but also the more common technological disasters such as computer crashes and data loss. The chapter also offers suggestions on how to market and promote your disaster plan to your colleagues.

Finally, I have included a chapter on balance and how to bring your personal and professional lives into proper alignment. Many doctors are experiencing increased stress due to the time constraints of contemporary medical practices. The most successful practices and the most successful doctors have learned to put equal emphasis on both the personal as well as the professional aspects of their lives. As a result, doctors who have learned such balancing techniques have avoided burnout, have truly enjoyed their medical practices, and have an exemplary personal life that is also the envy of their colleagues.

I think you will find this *Fourth Edition* a refreshing addition to its predecessors. Although medicine has changed tremendously since the *First Edition*, the practice of medicine is still an admirable profession that offers tremendous opportunities and a lifetime of enjoyment and satisfaction. These opportunities are available to all of us. Ms. Henkel and I hope that, by using some of the ideas in this book, you will be successful in marketing and promoting your practice using ethical techniques. And we hope that you can find techniques you'll feel comfortable about employing but will also be able to sculpt a practice that meets all of your expectations and provides you with a lifetime of enjoyment and gratification.

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Dr. Neil Baum has been a physician in private practice in New Orleans for more than 30 years. He has published over 150 articles in peer-reviewed medical literature, and is also on the clinical faculty at Tulane University and Louisiana State University Medical Schools. He has written over 1000 articles and is the author of six books. Dr. Baum often speaks to groups of physicians, hospital medical and nursing staffs, office managers, and other healthcare professionals throughout the nation on topics of practice enhancement.

Dr. Baum has incorporated the “extra mile” philosophy into his medical practice. He and his staff believe that all patients should have a positive healthcare experience every time they visit the doctor’s office. That belief is expressed in the practice’s mission statement, which is to provide expert medical care, to exceed every patient’s expectations during their interaction with Dr. Baum and his staff, and to pay attention to the little details because they make a big difference. This book is written with that philosophy in mind, and it will provide numerous examples of how you can incorporate that same philosophy into your medical practice and reap the rewards of improved efficiencies, increased productivity, and, ultimately, enhanced profitability.

Dr. Baum’s coauthor, Gretchen Henkel, has been a health and medical writer for 29 years, producing articles and books for the consumer and physician trade markets. She has written for the *Los Angeles Times*, the American Cancer Society, and UCLA Medical Center. She is a frequent contributor to *The Hospitalist*, *The Rheumatologist*, *ENToday*, and *Health for Women* magazines, and is currently an editorial consultant for the UCLA National Center for Child Traumatic Stress and the National Child Traumatic Stress Network.

