

Pain Management Physicians: What Technology or Practice Management Tool Do Pain Management Practices Need to Adopt in 2012?

Five pain management physicians discuss what technology or practice management tool will be essential for practices to adopt in 2012.

Standiford Helm II, MD, Pacific Coast Pain Management Center (Laguna Hills, Calif.): Regardless of what happens to the Affordable Care Act in the courts, we will see a move from reimbursement for services provided to flat fee payments for a diagnosis. In that setting, pain management physicians will need to develop the practice management tools to demonstrate that the procedures and treatments their individual practice provides provide benefit and are cost-effective compared to alternatives.

A second major issue which interventional pain management will need to be in front of is the response to the epidemic of deaths from prescription drugs. Public outcry will demand changes in how these medicines are prescribed. It is absolutely necessary that we are involved in responses to these concerns.

Laxmaiah Manchikanti, MD, Pain Management Center of Paducah (Paducah, Ky.): Once again, it all depends on how the [Obama] administration acts. The most important will be if they do not remove ICD-10 and electronic health records. If they do change this, it will be a major relief for interventional pain management.

Lora L. Brown, MD, Coastal Pain and Rehabilitation (Bradenton, Fla.): Given the environment within healthcare — and especially in pain management — of shrinking profits, one of the most important things pain management practices can do is participate in group purchasing organizations where they can reduce their overhead expenses. These allow them to gain leverage by purchasing with group discounts provided by the GPO.

Frank J. E. Falco, MD, Mid Atlantic Spine (Bear, Del.): A good and easy-to-use electronic medical record system is indispensable for any practice to survive in this fast-paced world of health care. The EMR system provides the means to assess key performance indicators; follow trends; track outcomes; bill more efficiently, effectively, and accurately and better follow up on outstanding charges.

Neil Kirschen, MD, Pain Management Center of Long Island (Rockville Centre, N.Y.): What would be very helpful is electronic records. Many of us are still writing our notes by hand. It would be nice to have a more comprehensive report taking from the patient and mesh that into some type of unified record. Especially in the field of pain management, it would be helpful to have easier access to patients' pharmacy information, [because] that's how we really know what the patient is taking.

Doctor shopping in pain management is still the biggest problem we encounter. A lot of patients are coming to pain management doctors, and we have no way of knowing which pharmacy the patient is going to and how many doctors they have seen. They'll come and act like it's the first time they're seeing a doctor. The government instituted website where you can check is still very cumbersome. I'd like to see a better system of notification. It's very hard for doctors and pharmacies to share information, but we need that for the patients' own benefit.