

PNN PREFERRED Network News

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Strategic Planning For Physical Therapy Practice by Tom Coplin, PT, Tom Coplin Consulting Services PLLC

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This article will present information needed to properly develop the five steps of a strategic plan.

Step one: Getting ready, is the most critical stage of the plan. Identify the issue(s) at hand. Skill at properly identifying the substance of the issue and not the symptoms will determine who is effective in responding to their environment (threats or opportunities) and, ultimately, who will or will not survive. An example would be trying to plan to avoid managed care plans for marketing more lucrative payors when the real issue might be a re-engineering of your practice. Create a committee to develop a plan. Planning should be an inclusive process. It should include everyone interested in the success of your practice. It is a good idea to include board of directors, staff, former patients, lenders and anyone else vested in the success of your practice.

An average of five people is the most workable. A member from the board of directors should be present so that issue, mission and plan get board approval. A staff member from each operational section of the practice to ensure realism of the plan, develop staff ownership and loyalty of the plan, involve future leaders in identity with the practice and help unite everyone to support the plan into a single collective effort. Including former patients is the best way to assess practice performance and receiving guidance for future patient needs. Including lenders/bank will help solve any future financial needs. An example of an external interested party for a sports medicine oriented practice would be an athletic director. Decide who does what. The best plan is developed by the people who ask or volunteer to perform needed tasks. Assignment of tasks should be a last resort.

Develop your practice profile. Evaluate the effectiveness of your practice programs' effectiveness and efficiency. The most important criteria of your practice programs' effectiveness is your profitability. This evaluation will provide data about whether to continue or discontinue each program, maintain its existing level, expand or change its direction, market it aggressively, etc. Identify information that must be collected to make decisions. Important measures of your practice effectiveness is fact based information like but not limited to:

Payor mix (including most valuable payors), process for timely identification of changes referral patterns, numbers of patients per day trends, visits per patient, average charge per patient, new patient registration trends (including visits per referral) etc. Also, looking at or developing outcomes of effectiveness of patient care by your practice. One simple and good way is to identify the average cost per referral for your top ICD-9s.

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Dynamic-PREFERRED Courses Appeal to a Variety of Learners

Today, online learning is more sophisticated than ever and designed to appeal to a wide variety of learners who possess various *learning styles*. Although you may wonder if only visual, self-directed learners can succeed at online learning, courses are actually geared toward people who possess a variety of preferred learning styles.

Dynamic courses offer students much more than just text on the computer screen. While text-based content is the primary method of delivery, we take special care to organize the material into small, manageable topics on separate pages, to help the learner digest and retain the concepts at their own pace. We add stylistic touches such as bold text and italics for emphasis, bullet points and lists to showcase important information, graphics and icons to add interest and illustrate important points, and color for visual interest. Scattered throughout many of our courses are helpful web links, which allow you to click to visit another site, where you will find more information or perhaps a recommended article to supplement the text. Convenient reference and web link lists are also provided for each course, which the student may save on their computer or print if they wish. Several courses include special assignments, activities, points to ponder or supplemental CD Roms, in order to give students real-life practice and experience with the new concepts and skills they are learning.

Communication among students and instructors is enhanced by features such as chat, discussion board, class email and email links directly to the instructor. All courses include mini-quizzes or exams to test student's understanding and retention of the material, and we top each course off with a Satisfaction Survey to allow students to share their feedback in our continuing quest to be the best! For additional information on the E-learning, call us toll free at 888.338.3247 or visit www.preferred-dynamiclearning.com.

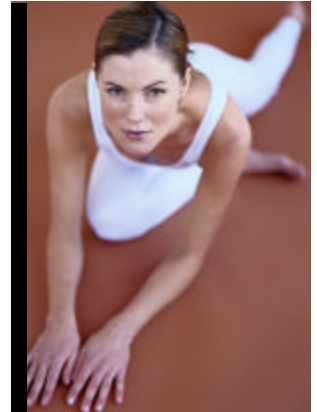
Texas Providers Only: HealthSmart/NTHN Update

As our Texas providers now know, Healthsmart and North Texas Healthcare Network (NTHN) have merged. During recent transition issues it was brought to our attention that the Healthsmart contract may possibly prevail over all Healthsmart and NTHN business, which is slightly different than what we were originally told. **Healthsmart has informed us that it is best to call them to verify your patients participation for each plan and not NTHN. If the number is not on the card you can call 800-687-0500 x 2570.** If you see any Gated EPO or POS patients through the NTHN business and have trouble verifying your participation prior to treating the patient, please call our Provider Relations Dept right away for assistance.

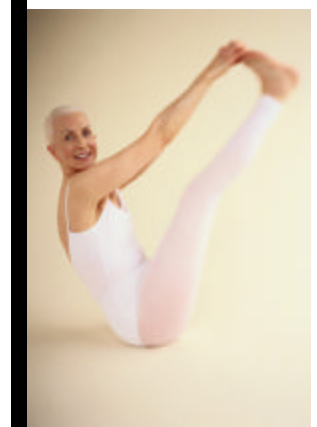
New Features on Beech Street's Web Site

The first new feature is called "**Self-Service Center**" – Please go to the following link and see the capabilities first hand: <http://www.beechstreet.com/selfservice.html>.

The second feature is called "**Claim Status Inquiry**" – Now providers, clients, and patients are able to look up claim status on their own – Please go to the following link and see how this works: <http://claimstatus.beechstreet.com/claimstatus/lookup.do?user=client#here>.



"Now Beech Street providers, clients, and patients are able to look up claim status on their own."



NEW Employee Profile— Paula

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| Name: Paula Sharits | membership sales, new member welcome calls, etc. | Favorite Pastimes : Watching my daughters dance. They make me so proud! |
| Nick-name: Pending | | |
| Length of employment with Preferred: Brand new! | What you like most about your job: The positive atmosphere in the office and the opportunity for learning and new challenges. | About your family: I have two daughters – Sarah, 18 and Melissa, 15. They are the lights of my life! |
| Job Title and responsibilities: Network Development Associate – | | |

Therapy Cap and Medicare Fee Schedule Cuts— There's Still Time—Act Now!

Congress is scheduled to adjourn the 2003 session on November 21st. YOU can still make a difference! Through their Legislative Action Alert, the APTA prompts its members to "Contact your Members of Congress immediately and urge them not to adjourn for the year without passing a Medicare bill that: includes a moratorium on the therapy cap, includes a demonstration project on direct access, and prevents severe cuts in payments under the Part B fee schedule."

The anticipated change to the 2004 medicare fee schedule is 4.5% REDUCTION. Without Congressional intervention, the methodology currently in place to determine payments will apply. From the CMS website: "The Medicare reform package now pending before Congress contains a provision that would adjust these payments for 2004," said CMS Administrator Tom Scully. "However, CMS has no option other than to base this final rule on the current law. If Congress does pass legislation improving payments to physicians, CMS will implement the new payment rates as quickly as possible."

To read the October 30th Medicare release referenced above in its entirety, go to <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/media/press/release.asp?Counter=889>. Go to your professional association's website for a quick connection to your members of Congress and example letters.

Hot Resource!

Check out www.providerlaw.com. This site provides legal background and resources to help providers. They attack provider-sensitive subjects, from wrongful medical necessity denials, to combating health plan payment delay tactics. They also provide quick links for providers to fight the therapy cap (including letters drafted by the APTA). Go to the website and click on "public" and then "public directory". Access to this section of the website is free. You can also become a Member and have access to legal expertise to help you with issues such as claims and collections. *Our thanks to Matt Middlebrook from OCCU-MED in Texas for the scoop!

Preferred Tidbits...

New Contract

PREFERRED has recently signed a contract with the Riverside County Foundation for Medical Care (RCFMC) in California. Members in that county will now have access to RCFMC's PPO, EPO, and Workers' Compensation products in that county. For more information call our Provider Relations department at 800.664.5240.

Gift Giving:

The Foundation for Physical Therapy continues its fund raising, and **PREFERRED** is a proud sponsor. For \$25.00, you may purchase a raffle ticket to win a brand new Mustang Convertible. Better yet, for \$100.00, you receive five tickets. Do something special for your hard-working staff.

Call **PREFERRED** today and we will be happy to send the tickets to you.

The raffle will end at Combined Sections Meeting, February, 2004 in Nashville. [Come see us in booth # 849!](#)

Strategic Planning For Physical Therapy Practice, Con't

Any practice assessment should also include looking at operational procedures and looking for more efficient ways to put patients through your system. These could be changing paper process to computer, identifying idiosyncrasies in payors reimbursement requirements and training staff to make sure they are aware of these and the documentation requirements to support the CPTS that properly support the ICD-9s. It is important to know how your practice is viewed from the outside. Surveys by patients, referral sources and payors are crucial to helping structure how you present yourself to the public. At the end of step one there is a work plan. The work plan is a blueprint of the process of developing the strategic plan.

For a copy of the sample work plan that accompanies this article, please call us at 800.664.5240 and request the sample work plan for strategic planning.

PREFERRED Vendor Profile – Lead-Lok, Inc.



PREFERRED is happy to announce that it has just added Lead-Lok, Inc, a major manufacturer of disposable electrocardiographic and electrotherapy electrodes, to its list of **PREFERRED** vendors. A leader in biomedical innovations, Lead-Lok manufactures and sells a complete line of ECG electrodes, TENS electrodes, electrotherapy devices, iontophoresis products, holter kits, chart paper, snap leads and many other accessories. The discount for **PREFERRED** providers is 35% to 45%.

Their main facility is located in beautiful Sandpoint, Idaho USA and has been in business since 1986, while their European factory is located in Warsaw, Poland and has been in business since 1991. They are FDA-registered and their products are ISO 9001 certified and carry the CE mark. For more information about Lead-Lok's products, contact them at 800-201-3958 or visit the company's Web site at www.leadlok.com. *Our thanks to Chip Gilbert from Hand and Upper Extremity Rehab for the lead on this vendor!

Read this newsletter online at www.preferredtherapy.com. Just click on "Newsletters".

Provider Newsletter Disclaimer

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