

## Q: How can better Clinical Record Keeping help to build your practice?

The very best way to build a thriving healthcare practice is to provide care that is effective and safe - and to make sure that everyone in your community knows that's what you do. There is only one modality that can help you to accomplish all your goals around minimizing risk, maximizing efficacy and promoting your practice in an ethical way - your clinical record keeping.

### **Intake Form**

- New patient intake forms should be comprehensive enough to immediately identify red flags (reasons to be cautious about taking on their case).
- While NP intake forms are informing you about the patient's situation, this paperwork can be used to promote you, too. Create a customized header that boasts of your qualifications and broadcasts your unique philosophy, professional associations or special interests. It will be much more effective than the usual clinic address and phone number.
- On any checklists to screen for red flag conditions, be sure to include disorders that you want to see more of. Help every new patient to appreciate your scope of practice.

### **History/Physical Exam**

- In order to prove the effectiveness of a particular healthcare approach, we need evidence. Your initial history/physical exam forms will establish a baseline for your new patient's condition; ongoing treatment notes provide objective documentation of changes to their status.
- Forms for consistently recording the important details of a patient's history and physical exam findings will help you to make more informed decisions about their treatment. This means your success rate can only improve with each new patient who comes through your door.

### **Consent to Care**

- Properly documented 'consent to care' is an essential part of every patient's file; the very act of informing patients of the risks and benefits of treatment should be the start of a pattern of open and clear conversations between you and your patients. Good communications are the best way to ensure everyone's safety.

### **Report of Findings**

- Done up right, a written report of findings which lays out your clinical impression and proposed treatment plan is one of the most valuable promotional tools you have. Your patient will share it with their circle of family and friends and you can use it as the basis for your correspondence with other health care practitioners.

Good record keeping is the foundation of clinical research and it helps to provide structure and consistency to your daily practice. It facilitates collaborative care and demonstrates your competency to third parties such as insurance companies and regulatory bodies. This is how to ensure that over the long-run you are able to build a flourishing, satisfying practice. And, don't forget that a commitment to keeping better clinical records is one of the most important gifts you can ever give your patients.