

## Meeting Expectations

Setting aside time on a regular basis for both clinical and clerical staff to meet could significantly improve your medical practice in a variety of ways.

The physicians and staff at your practice are a team. How well you function together as a team depends on several factors -- most importantly, how well you communicate with each other. On the most basic level, a staff meeting is an opportunity for physicians and staff to sit down face to face and address common issues. Here are some meeting guidelines:

Establish a set time to hold your meetings. In a busy practice, it's much easier to cancel if no meeting is necessary than it is to disrupt everyone's schedules if the need for a meeting arises.

Prepare an agenda. Circulate it two or three days before the meeting and request feedback and additional items. Hand out a final, updated agenda at the meeting. The tone of the meeting is generally set by the items at the top. You may want to start off (and end) with a relatively light topic and save the more serious issues for the middle of the meeting.

Start and end on time. It is imperative to respect everyone's time. This may be a challenge in the beginning until you see how long it takes to get through an agenda. Be prepared to table some noncritical topics if necessary.

Keep the meeting simple. Appoint a facilitator to keep the meeting focused on agenda topics and ensure that no one person dominates the discussion.

Prepare an action plan. Do this after the meeting and circulate it to everyone who attended. List any action steps to be taken, the person responsible, and the completion date.

Have some fun. Mix things up by having an occasional "meet and eat" or going out to lunch.

It may be useful to alternate staff meetings with department meetings so clinical and clerical personnel can gather regularly to discuss topics germane to their areas.

Be prepared to table some noncritical topics if necessary.