

Part B Insider (Multispecialty) Coding Alert

SCHEDULING: Arrive at a Truthful Schedule Before You

Most practices have templates that don't reflect reality

So you want to move your practice over to a same-day scheduling model. Before you do anything else, you need to come up with a template for your practice's schedules that reflects reality, says **John Otterson**, director of ambulatory service design at the University of Wisconsin Hospital and Clinics.

You should collect data on the capacity of your practice by going into your scheduling software and gathering data on appointments. Try to find out, "without any clinical triaging taking place, how many patients would that schedule accommodate if we do not double- and triple-book," Otterson says. Look at the number of appointment slots per physician per day.

Then look at actual activity in your practice. "You lay the actual data next to the template to see if they closely resemble each other," Otterson says. "In general, they don't."

The third piece you need to understand is the actual demand in your practice. This doesn't mean the number of patients on the schedule, but "the number of patients per day that would call you and want to be on that schedule if you had availability," Otterson says. It's hard to measure this number.

There are many reasons why a practice may have unrealistic schedules, including a doctor who insists on three treadmill slots per week when there's demand for only one, Otterson says.