

## Part B Insider (Multispecialty) Coding Alert

### Scheduling: Running Behind? Use the .75 Percent Solution

#### Figure out which patient demand your practice can control

How do you figure out your patient demand? If you started tomorrow with a blank slate, how many patients would beat on your door?

The rewards for figuring out your patient volume can be enormous. It can help you move to same-day scheduling for more of your patients. But even if you're not interested in same-day scheduling, knowing how many patients actually want your services can help you use resources much more efficiently.

If you're constantly running behind, it's time to take a realistic look at your demand and how many patients you can actually see, says **Jack Valancy**, a consultant in Cleveland Heights, Ohio.

The first thing you should realize is that there are two kinds of demand: external and internal, says **Catherine Tantau**, president of Tantau & Associates in Grass Valley, Calif. External demand is the number of patients who call for an appointment who receive an appointment, plus walk-ins. Add to that the number of "deflections," patients who call with an urgent problem whom you have to send to an urgent care clinic because you can't see them right away.

Internal demand is the demand your practice generates. If you see 25 patients today, and 10 of those leave with a return appointment already booked, that shows you how many patients you're adding to your schedule every day. Don't count the patients who go home and call in for a follow-up once they've checked their schedules, because those should count as call-ins.

Understanding your external and internal demand will let you know what your demand will be if you don't change anything. If your practice feels totally overwhelmed by demand, remember that you have "total control" over internal demand, Tantau says. Maybe you're bringing patients back too often or on the wrong days.

Tantau says a surprising number of practices find that the daily demand for services is roughly 0.75 percent of their patient census. So if you have 2,000 patients, roughly 15 of them will call every day. Tantau and her colleagues have checked this number at Kaiser Permanente, the Mayo Clinic and a number of other groups. That said, she admits that there may be a million reasons why that number won't apply perfectly to your practice.