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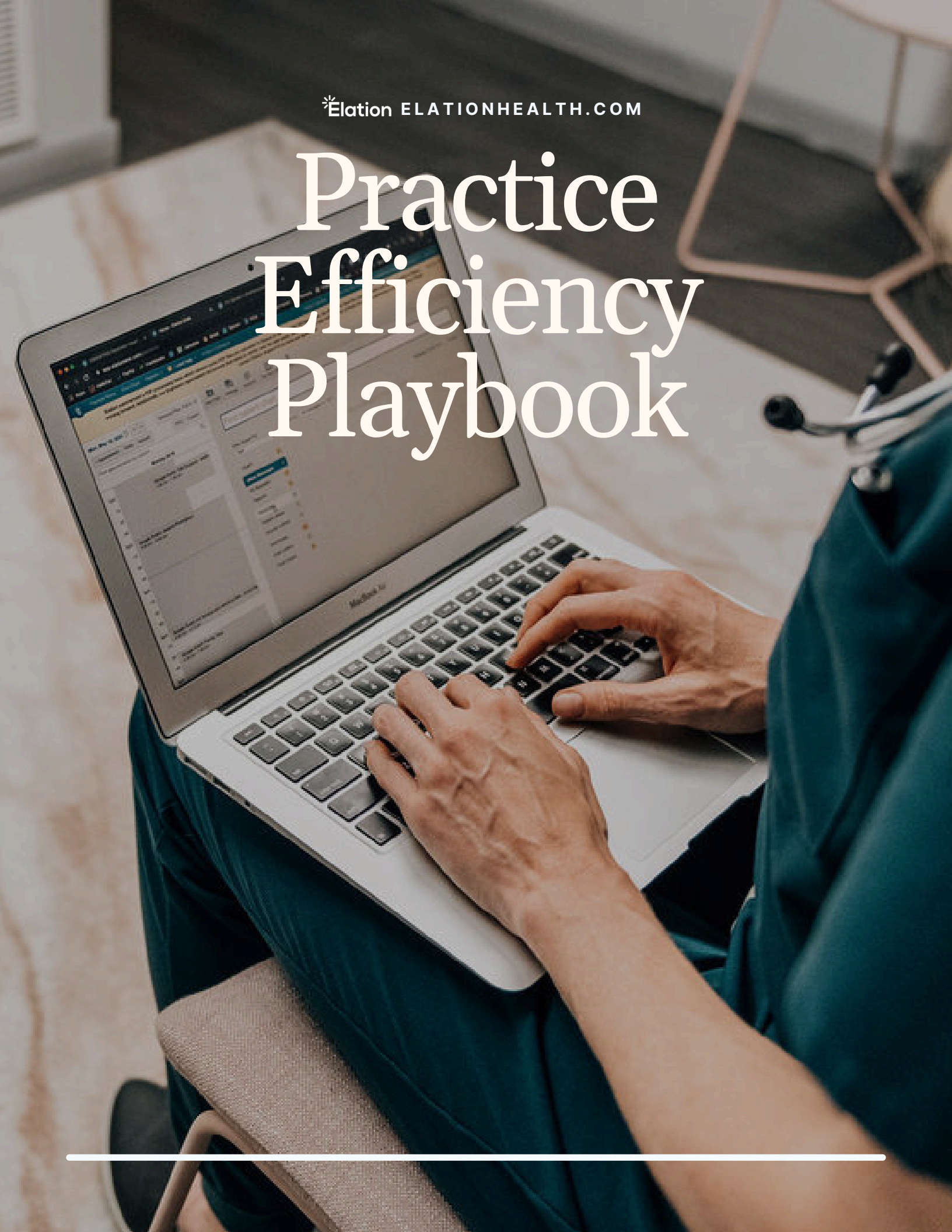
Practice Efficiency Playbook





Introduction

More and more physicians are finding that administrative burdens are getting in the way of spending more time with their patients and their own lives. What's infamously been dubbed as "pajama time" that clinicians find less and less time to enjoy has been reduced by the daily avalanche of "paperwork" and tasks to be handled outside the patient encounter.

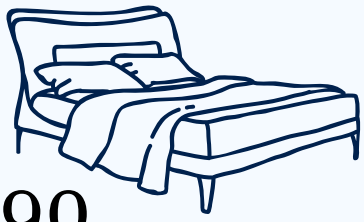
Overcoming administrative burden

The goal of this resource is simple. To help you understand and alleviate the most common clinical and administrative burdens in your practice and help you find technology and solutions that can allow you to harness the power of seamless clinical workflows to confidently deliver high-quality, personalized primary care. "Work smarter, not harder" – as they say. At the end of this guide, we'll also share some reflections from clinicians that are overcoming administrative burdens to give you an idea of what a more sustainable balance can look like.



Understanding *administrative burden*

Numerous studies have shown that the number one factor driving stress and burnout in primary care today is administrative burden as complex administrative burdens both impact practice efficiency and can be overwhelming. Moreover, “work after work” eats up precious personal and family time. A 2018 study published in the Annals of Family Medicine found that physicians spent an average of 90 minutes in their EHRs after hours and at home, during the time often referred to as “pajama time”, and more recent survey data suggests that this is actually getting worse, not better.



90 minutes

Physicians spend an average of 90 minutes daily on documentation after hours or “pajama time.”

At the same time, insurance coding and compliance rules increase the volume and complexity of documentation requirements, creating obstacles to being fairly paid for the work being done, and primary care physicians are often leaving lots of money on the table as a result of their inability to keep up.

Within the healthcare landscape, we know that the fee-for-service payment models are driving too much transactional work into primary care, and the push to adopt value based models is actually adding new work. So while technology is not the only - or maybe even the main - problem, we do know that high volumes of data entry (“documentation burden”) and poor EHR usability (“death by 1000 clicks” and cumbersome workflows) are key contributors to physician burnout, according to a study completed by the Mayo Clinic in 2019.

And these burdens are having an impact not only for clinicians but for the entire healthcare system. A variety of studies over the last two decades have found that administrative expenses account for approximately 15 percent to 25 percent of total national health care expenditures, an amount that represents an estimated $600 billion to $1 trillion per year of the total national health expenditures of $3.8 trillion in 2019. Billing and coding costs, physician administrative activities, and insurance administrative costs are the primary drivers of these expenses as a JAMA study shows.

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ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES IN THE US HEALTH CARE SYSTEM
MICHAEL CHERNEW, PHD; HARRISON MINTZ, MPH
JAMA NETWORK 2021

Finding technology that reduces administrative burdens

The work of primary care is comprehensive, coordinated, and proactive. It is unique in all of medicine, and therefore the technology needs are unique as well. Technology can and should make the work of primary care easier, not harder.

It should free up the physician to focus on the patient and create a more patient-centered experience. It should automate time consuming and redundant tasks, offload the practice operations and overhead through things like patient self-scheduling, a digital patient intake process, bulk prescription renewals, and other smart workflows.

8. MBA HEALTH GROUP. WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW TO OPEN A MEDICAL PRACTICE? MBA HEALTH GROUP WEBSITE. HTTP://WWW.MBAHEALTHGROUP.COM/2016/02/TOP-5-MISTAKES-MADE-WHEN-YOU-OPEN-A-MEDICAL-PRACTICE/. ACCESSED APRIL 12, 2017.

It should make integration with external records sources and additional technology solutions as easy as it needs to be, creating a seamless digital ecosystem, at the core of which is an intuitive, clinical-first EHR that functions and feels the way clinicians think. And it should make the work of capturing and reporting tasks and activities tied to billing and reimbursement as simple as possible, working behind the scenes to ensure clean claims and maximize pay for performance and RAF recapture so that revenue is not left on the table.

Intuitive and unified clinical-first tools and workflows give clinicians the freedom to:

- **Focus on patient care, not EHR navigation and redundant tasks**
- **Automate, time-consuming tasks; self-scheduling, clinical intake**
- **Deliver high-quality care with quick + easy access to intuitive tech tools and workflows; eFax, ePrescribing, eOrdering, care collaboration**
- **Feel confident billing is compliant, revenue is maximized, and financial insight is transparent**

When looking for an EHR or solution that can help you save time and reduce overhead burden many of our clinicians highlighted the following features as crucial for their practice success:

- **Intuitive charting** with templated notes, automated coding, and clinical reminders to provide value-based care
- **eOrdering** through clinical integrations for quick orders and results and lab and imaging results that automatically populate charts
- **ePrescribing** with EPCS, one-click PDMP integration, and bulk refills
- **Care collaboration** through features like electronic patient chart access via tools like the Elation Provider Network, secure patient portal messaging like Elation Passport, and direct messaging with your care team
- **Seamless Telehealth** that's HIPAA compliant
- **Patient portals** for appointment self-scheduling, clinician communication, lab/order results
- **Referral management** and tracking through native eFax and reminder systems
- **Integrated eFax** that's HIPAA compliant, electronic intake forms, insurance card upload, and inclusive demographics.



Best practices from clinicians that use Elation

Dr. Robert Wolf at Wolf Medical Group in Maryland recently shared with us how his practice reduced administrative burden and achieved a more effective clinical workflow by leveraging a clinical-first EHR and associated technology.

“At the core of this ecosystem is an EHR that integrates well with other technologies”

To summarize the best practices we heard from Dr Wolf, the technology enablers that are helping him include a variety of solutions that form a digital ecosystem that flows seamlessly across the demands of his practice. At the core of this ecosystem is an EHR that integrates well with other technologies and that is purpose-built to work the way clinicians think and support clinical workflows, not coding and billing.

He easily captures enough documentation to maximize billing. He almost effortlessly identifies, documents, and reports key clinical activities to both improve patient care and capture additional revenue beyond CPT coding. He simultaneously decreases his documentation time and improves the quality of his documentation by leveraging his clinical-first EHR, dictation software, and fully customizable text expansion software. He captures photos and other relevant clinical documents using a mobile device, then easily drags and drops these into the patient record. He has abandoned post it notes and hand-written messages and reminders and now organizes, tracks, and assigns his administrative and practice management work using an internal messaging system, which helps unclutter the clinical record and ensures he doesn’t lose track of important or time-sensitive tasks.

Another clinician, **Chad Harrington, PA-C, who runs Healing Arts Family Medicine in Colorado** which is a hybrid direct primary care and insurance-based practice talked to us about finding a seamless solution for his unique practice needs. He highlighted finding an EHR that's easy to set-up[3] and offers customized implementation. Transitioning to a new tool is a step in the process of obtaining the right solution that clinicians often forget can also create administrative burden without the right support, according to Harrington.

Because Harrington supports two very different billing models, he found that having a tool that is billing flexible and is able to integrate to many different tools and partners is also key to practice success, especially in the context of the transition to value-based care. One specific example of a clinical workflow that's helping reduce burden and save time in Harrington's practice is ePrescribing, before using his current EHR, Harrington had to log into a whole different system to be able to prescribe a medication and now enjoys a seamless experience that makes filling out forms as easy as hitting enter. Unlike doctors who have to spend excessive time documenting outside business hours, Harrington has found that intuitive software like Elation's EHR can make the process of documenting much easier and with minimal clicks. He only spends a short amount of time finishing up his charts and cleaning things up at the end of the day.

> "Having a tool that is billing flexible and is able to integrate to many different tools and partners is also key to practice success, especially in the context of the transition to value-based care."

Conclusion

From clinical documentation that is taking up extra time and effort to complex regulatory and reporting requirements to cumbersome technology and workflows, it's no wonder that more and more clinicians are stressed and facing administrative burdens. And the problem is not only affecting clinicians and their practices but also leading to inefficiencies across the entire healthcare system and most importantly, has implications for the quality of patient care.

Even though the problem of administrative burden is a big one, we believe that with the right tools you can alleviate some of your biggest administrative burdens and have the freedom to practice your way while providing phenomenal patient care. Learn more about how we help support primary care practices.

Elation's *Commitment*

Elation Health is the most trusted technology platform for independent primary care. Since 2010, the company has delivered clinical-first solutions — built on an award-winning collaborative EHR platform — that helps practices start, grow, communicate, and succeed in delivering the highest-quality personalized care to patients. Elation Health is empowering primary care providers to uphold the craft of medicine, while thriving in an evolving healthcare landscape. Today, Elation Health serves 20,000 clinicians caring for 9.3 million Americans. Learn more at elationhealth.com, LinkedIn, and Twitter.


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