



Reimagine Your Practice with Technology

Make 2026 a great year!

BY JOHN V. GUILIANA, DPM, MS

It's 2026! Yet many of us are trapped in 1986 when it comes to technology. It's time to reimagine your practice and use technology that can help you overcome some of today's practice challenges.

Ever since the pandemic, staff shortages and administrative burdens have reached record highs across healthcare, and podiatry is no exception. From front desk turnover to difficulty recruiting and retaining medical assistants, to burnout among staff are all common pain points. At the same time technology has accelerated, which includes advanced EHR systems, patient engagement platforms, and AI driven scheduling tools. But because of staffing issues and burnout, many practices struggle to integrate these important systems.

These challenges are not unique to podiatry. An Oct. 1, 2024, MGMA *Stat* poll finds that most medical groups (53%) point to finding good candidates as their top staffing challenge this year, ahead of compensation and benefits (29%), retention

(16%) and "other" (2%). According to an AMA poll, physicians continue to experience job stress in 2025, but there appears to be some positive movement. Last year, 45.1% expressed a great deal of stress because of their job, but that is down from 50.7% in 2023 and 55.6% in 2022. More than one-third of respondents

shortages, and they often offer competitive wages with less stress and a better work-life balance. That leaves podiatry practices struggling to fill positions.

In today's environment, podiatry practices are under increasing pressure to do more with less. To thrive, practices must focus on staffing, tech-

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blamed the continued stress on ineffective EHR systems which lead to time-consuming documentation requirements, often needing to be completed after working hours.

The demand for medical assistants continues to outpace the supply. Competition with other industries is the primary reason for the shortage. Retail and other service sectors have also been experiencing

nology, and workflow in a way that maximizes efficiency, enhances patient care, and supports staff satisfaction.

Automation should never be looked at as a substitute for the care and attention provided by expert healthcare workers. But the automations available in modern EHR functions and practice management sys-

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tems can reduce the need to hire more people to perform the same tasks, as well as minimize manual data entry that can contribute to the staff feeling overwhelmed. Indeed, it's time for podiatry practices to embrace and integrate AI and automation strategies into their workflow. It's now almost essential for podiatry practices seeking to improve profitability and patient satisfaction in 2026 and beyond.

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Reimagine Staffing Models

A podiatry practice needs flexibility in staffing. Cross-training is key. Front-office staff should be able to handle simple billing questions, and clinical staff should understand the basics of scheduling and documentation. Clear and concise job descriptions prevent "task drift," where employees take on unrelated responsibilities that reduce efficiency.

The office administrator should track metrics such as phone response times, pre-authorization times and delays, days in A/R, etc. These metrics can reveal staffing imbalances or workflow bottlenecks. Retention strategies should include fair pay scales (remember that you are competing against large healthcare institutions and retail), career development pathways, and a culture of recognition and autonomy.

Reimagine Technology

Many podiatry practices underuse the technology they already have. The goal should be to integrate and optimize existing features in the EHR. Review your EHR and practice management systems to be sure they communicate seamlessly and help the staff avoid needing to enter the same information multiple times.

Reimagine Administrative and Operational Tasks

Automating the repetitive and paper tasks that consume staff time

allows your employees to focus on higher-value activities. This includes adopting online patient portals that allow patients to complete intake forms, update information, and access their medical records and test results from home. This eliminates manual data entry, shortens wait times, and ensures more accurate data.

Automating the scheduling process allows patients to book their own appointments online and can

free up staff who otherwise would be managing phones.

The entire patient check-in process can be automated. A kiosk can streamline check-in by allowing patients to verify their details, update insurance, and sign consent forms without tying up a receptionist.

Inventory management systems can automatically track and manage inventory levels for everything from medical supplies to products sold in-office (e.g., foot creams, CAM Walkers, night splints, etc.). This technology can trigger re-orders, optimize stock levels, and automatically apply sales tax to purchases when applicable.

AI-driven clinical documentation is now becoming very popular. Speech-to-text software can transcribe your notes during an encounter and produce clinical documentation for your review. This can save you hours of documentation each day, freeing you up to see more patients.

Reimagine Patient Communication and Patient Engagement

Automating patient communication not only reduces no-shows, but it can also make it easy to reach large numbers of patients with important information, such as weather-related office closures.

Sending automated text, email, or phone call reminders for upcoming appointments reduces no-show rates. Often the same system can be used

for targeted email campaigns that allows you to identify your patient list based on their diagnosis, history, or last visit. For instance, you can send automated follow-up messages after a procedure, or educational content on foot health to patients with diabetic foot care needs.

Lastly, sending automated patient experience surveys helps your practice show that you're listening to patient feedback. This can also automate the collection of positive reviews that can be posted on your website or social media.

Reimagine Financial and Billing Tasks

Automating financial processes can increase cash flow, minimize billing errors, and reduce administrative stress. AI-enhanced RCM systems handle billing and insurance tasks by automating claims processing, efficiently managing denials, and optimizing revenue collection.

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The patient portal can be integrated with a system that makes it easy for patients to pay their bills online. Automation can also be used for follow-up reminders on unpaid balances.

As your practice enters 2026, it might be wise to reimagine how technology can be used to help you become more profitable, less stressed, and more appreciated by patients. The possibilities are endless! **PM**



Dr. Guiliana is a nationally recognized speaker and author on topics pertaining to medical practice management. He is a Fellow of the American Academy of Podiatric Practice Management and holds a Master's Degree in Healthcare Management. He has authored numerous columns in various journals and is the co-author of *31½ Essentials to Running Your Medical Practice*, as well as *The Million Dollar Practice...Keys to Success*. Dr. Guiliana is currently a Medical Director of Podiatry for Modernizing Medicine's award-winning technology. He can be reached at John.guiliana@modmed.com.