



It's Winter! Does Your Practice Typically Slow Down?...

There's lots to do!

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Whether you practice in warmer climates or colder ones, winter often brings a natural lull in patient volume for podiatry practices. Between holiday distractions, inclement weather, unmet deductibles, and the perception that foot care can wait until spring, many practices see fewer appointments from December through February. But winter can also be one of the best times to get caught up on many important things that were placed on the "back burner, such as reactivation of your inactive patients, HIPAA training, website updates, organizing clutter, evaluating and assessing practice needs, and positioning your practice for a strong spring surge through strategic marketing.

Let's focus on marketing first.

Educating patients about winter foot problems is an effective first step. Many people do not associate winter with foot issues, even though the colder season brings concerns such

who might already be thinking about improving their health in their "New Year's resolutions". Offering diabetic foot exams, orthotics evaluations, or skin and nail care assessments as part

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as dry and cracked heels, aggravated neuropathy, reduced circulation, and increased injuries due to ice and from winter sports. Creating educational content through videos, social posts, and blog articles helps patients understand why foot care is important during colder months.

Launching a "New Year, New Feet" wellness campaign in January is another way to engage patients

of a seasonal promotion encourages patients to prioritize preventive foot health.

Re-activating your existing patient base during winter can significantly improve your schedule. Today's technologies allow for personalized emails, text reminders, and newsletters to help remind patients who have not been seen in several months

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that it is a good time to come in for a check-up.

During your winter slow months, strengthening referral relationships with primary care physicians, endocrinologists, vascular specialists, pediatricians, and urgent care providers can also help maintain patient flow. Sharing referral materials, distributing quick educational guides, or offering short lunch-and-learn presentations reinforces your value and keeps your practice top-of-mind for winter referrals.

Don't forget to focus on your website and patient reviews! Improving your online presence during slower months can pay off for the rest of the year. Asking satisfied patients for Google or *Healthgrades* reviews, updating your website content, improving local SEO, and refreshing your social media pages help strengthen

derstand the financial and clinical health of your practice. You should be analyzing your year-end charges, collections, CPT utilization, referral sources, accounts receivables, payer mix by charges and collections, MIPS compliance, and profit/

curve and slower months would be an ideal time to invest and tackle adoption.

Lastly, don't forget that slow seasons affect your staff as well! They can begin to worry about the fate of their job. A motivated and united

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loss statement, and comparing them to those of the prior year. During busy times of the year, many podiatrists get caught up in working *in* their practice and not *on* their practice. Working on their business takes a backseat. However, when your schedule finally slows, it's a great chance to reflect on the past

team is vital for long-term success. Promoting relationships within your team enhances overall performance and patient interactions. Consider creating team activities, organizing team-building events and social gatherings that strengthen relationships among staff members. These experiences improve morale and cultivate a positive environment where everyone feels connected and supported. You can also implement programs to celebrate employee achievements and contributions. Recognizing hard work motivates staff and reinforces a culture of excellence and appreciation.

With the right mix of education, reactivation, referral outreach, assessment of achievements, and motivational leadership, you can maintain strong patient flow and use the winter months to set the stage for long-term growth. Winter slow months can become an opportunity rather than an obstacle. It might be February, but you have lots to do! **PM**



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ment. He has authored numerous columns in various journals and is the co-author of *3 1/2 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 guiliana@modmed.com.

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your digital reputation and increases visibility.

If you practice in an area that receives lots of snow and ice, creating a winter injury-prevention program positions your practice as a community resource. Providing educational workshops for senior centers, sharing content on safe winter footwear, or creating guides for gyms and physical therapy clinics can generate trust and new referrals.

Winter is also a smart time to build strategic partnerships with local businesses and health organizations. Developing relationships with running stores, orthopedic groups, ski shops, fitness centers, diabetic educators, and senior communities creates collaborative opportunities that extend well beyond the winter months.

Don't forget to run reports. As you prepare for the spring-time surge, now would be the time to run crucial reports that help you un-

year using the insight gleaned from the reports that you ran. At a staff meeting, ask what went well, what can we improve on, what were the stress points? Working on your business is just as important as working in it for true growth year after year.

You can also use slow seasons to fulfill Continuing Medical Education (CME) requirements, stay current, or learn new and innovative treatments that improve not only your practice revenue streams, but also patient outcomes. Don't forget to keep up with policy changes. The healthcare landscape is constantly changing, so using slower periods for learning helps you stay in the loop with new regulations and policies. Use this time for online or in-person courses or even to address personal fulfillments through some downtime and vacations.

Are you considering new technologies? If so, remember that some technologies come with a learning