

APRIL, 2022

Best practices to
**Maximize your
practice's Star
Rating performance**



Hi! We're Oscar!

We're on a mission to be the health insurance partner that **makes your job easier**.

We researched and collected the best practices used nationwide to improve Star Rating performance for your office. So you can get back to the important things... **like exceptional care**.



Opportunities prior to a visit

Your patients' perception of your practice starts before the first visit. Right now, patients value convenience, time efficiency, and customer service. Here are some best practices to consider implementing:

CONVENIENCE

- Provide opportunities for same-day, acute care visits¹
 - Use or implement a patient portal to share test results and consider automatically releasing the results once they're reviewed by the provider
 - Eliminate barriers to flu shots and other vaccinations by offering multiple options (walk-in appointments, flu shot clinics, vaccinations at every appointment type, if the patient's eligible)²
 - Offer waitlist options when your practice is fully booked or offer a chance to see another provider in the office
 - Offer telemedicine services to make it convenient for patients to connect with a providers - by phone or video - as an alternative to in-person appointments³
- Online Information saves phone calls and increases efficiency
 - Consider adding virtual patient forms, pharmacy refill requests, prior authorization information and "Contact Us" feature for email correspondence⁴
 - Clearly outline expectations and average turnaround times for responses⁵



Opportunities at the front office

Every interaction with patients – both direct and indirect – has an impact on your patients' perception of your practice. Here are some opportunities to make the best impression with your patients.

CONNECTION

Positive interactions start with positive introductions

- Welcome patients by their name and thank them for coming¹
- Be curious about the patient: what name do they prefer to be called, how do they prefer to be notified of important information (phone, text, email)?²
- Take a genuine interest in the patient³

COMMUNICATION

Go beyond telling patients what to do and explain the “why” behind it

- Keep patients informed of unexpected delays in service⁴
- Listen effectively to patients' requests and promptly take the necessary actions to assist them⁵
- Consistent eye contact is linked to empathy and patient satisfaction⁶

CONSIDERATION

The golden rule is still golden

- Be mindful of patients' wait times and expedite care whenever possible
- Think about your own experiences as a patient. What are things you would have liked to have gone differently?⁷
- Give frequent updates as to delays >10 minutes or offer the opportunity to reschedule or see another provider⁸
- Avoid personal conversations while patients are present; patients view it as unprofessional and inappropriate behavior⁹
- Ask about transportation; offer to call and schedule pick-up prior to check out to reduce patient wait times for a pick-up
- Provide patients the opportunity to use the restroom prior to seeing the provider¹¹

Opportunities during the rooming process

Engage with patients to improve their service satisfaction using both your clinical and customer service skills. Here's how you can exceed your patients' expectations during the rooming process.

COMMUNICATION

Let the patient know what you're doing & why

- Explain the purpose of labs, procedures, and vital signs¹
- Offer the patient a chance to ask questions²
- Ask if the patient has Advanced Care Planning (ACP) in place and / or would like to speak to the provider regarding ACP at this visit³
- Ask the patient if they're seeing other providers. If so, which specialties?⁴

MEDICATION RECONCILIATION

Verify each medication by brand and generic name

- Ask specifically about any additional medications, such as vitamins, supplements, or other forms of medication⁵
- Document the review of the medication in the record

BIOMETRICS

Vital signs are vital

- Apply best practices when it comes to taking the BP⁶
- If the BP is elevated (SBP >140 or DBP >90), wait 5 minutes and repeat⁷
- Assess and document patients' pain⁸

Simple tips to get an accurate blood pressure reading

The common positioning errors can result in inaccurate blood pressure measurement. Figures shown are estimates of how improper positioning can potentially impact blood pressure readings.

- **Don't have a conversation:** Talking or active listening adds 10 mm Hg*
- **Empty bladder first:** Full bladder adds 10 mm Hg*
- **Use correct cuff size:** Cuff too small adds 2-10 mm Hg*
- **Put cuff on bare arm:** Cuff over clothing adds 5-50 mm Hg*
- **Support arm at heart level:** Unsupported arm adds 10 mm Hg*
- **Support back/feet:** Unsupported back and feet adds 6 mm Hg*
- **Keep legs uncrossed:** Crossed legs add 2-8 Hg*
- Take BP last to allow patient to rest after being brought to exam room
- Repeat the BP reading in 5-10 minutes if elevated with a SBP >140 and/or DBP >90
- Any BP reading SBP >180 and DBP >110 should be considered hypertensive urgency and communicated to a provider immediately



Opportunities during the provider visit

The central focus of your patient's visit is their time with the provider. You can make the most of this time spent together to connect and provide a great experience for your patient.

COMMUNICATION

Let the patient lead the conversation and encourage them to express concerns or ask questions

- Make eye contact with your patient. Consistent eye contact is linked to empathy and patient satisfaction¹
- Practice active, empathetic listening; listen for potential unspoken issues²
- Avoid acronyms and jargon; speak in simple, layman's terms about diagnoses and treatments³
- Prompt the patient to ask questions and verify understanding⁴
- When addressing patient concerns, ask for specifics as to how the physical ailment is impacting the patient's daily life (i.e. ADLs, iADLs)⁵



Even more opportunities during the provider visit

PHYSICAL EXAM

The physical exam can build trust with the patient¹

- Focused physician exams during acute visits can be a less invasive diagnostic tool in addressing patients' concerns²
- Tie in functional status questions regarding body systems as you perform the exam, such as:
 - "Any pain in this knee? Have you experienced any falls this year? How stable do you feel on your feet? Do you need to hang onto walls, etc. while walking? Do you need any equipment to help you walk or get up from the bed or toilet?"³
- If further diagnostic testing is required, communicate the complete name of the test, (e.g., "CAT scan," versus "CT") and what you're hoping to definitively diagnose or rule out with this procedure⁴
- For older patients, ask specifically about incontinence and urinary leakage, and provide potential treatment options⁵
- Review patient's level of exercise, nutrition and assistance needed in meal preparation/shopping⁶



Opportunities surrounding medications

PRESCRIBING MEDICATIONS

Patients' medication adherence is directly linked to provider communication of instructions¹

- With new medications: address the key information about the drugs (what, why, when, how, and how long)²
- Collaborate with the patient by engaging, negotiating, and yes, sometimes compromising the plan of care to ensure optimal patient adherence³
- Refer the patient to their pharmacist for additional questions after the visit or direct the patient to contact your office⁴
- Order 90-day supply for all maintenance medications⁵
- Electronically prescribe medications⁶
- Choose generics to avoid cost barriers⁷



Opportunities in care coordination

Much of the success of your practice is related to the coordination of your patient's care. Patients of all ages require assistance in navigating the healthcare system. By proactively addressing patient's potential needs, practices can reduce missed appointments, medication non-adherence, and gaps in needed care.¹

PATIENT/PROVIDER CARE COORDINATION

Managing patients' expectations is a major component to patient satisfaction²

- When referring patients to a specialist, assist members in identifying an appropriate specialist and making the initial appointment
- Give patients an expected timeline for:
 - Referral to first appointment with specialist
 - Prior authorization requests
 - Results of labs and tests
- Establish a workflow to share results and updates with patients as results are received

ASSESSING & ASSISTING W/ SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

Screening patients for socioeconomic barriers to care improves health outcomes and compliance with treatment plans³

- Ask about transportation needs for:
 - Appointments with your practice
 - Prescription delivery
 - Physical therapy
 - Specialist appointments
- Inquire about patients' support system at home:⁴
 - Are there other family members for whom the patient is a caregiver?
 - Does the patient have a caregiver? How is communication shared with that individual?
 - Are there assistive devices or durable medical equipment (DME) needs in the home?

Opportunities at check-out

Similar to the check-in process, the patient check-out process is the perfect opportunity to elevate your practice's customer service and patient-centered teamwork.

GRATITUDE & SETTING THE STAGE FOR A FOLLOW-UP

Ensure continuity of care

- Immediately schedule the patient's follow-up appointment¹
- Refer patients to in-network providers/facilities, inform patients of any authorization requirements, and assist patients with scheduling appointments when needed²
- Encourage patients to use your patient portal to access their health records, request prescription refills, and ask their provider any questions³
- Offer an alternative format of patient communication, if a portal is not available or the patient cannot access it⁴
- **Always** express gratitude for the patient coming in for the appointment and reiterate the date and time of the patient's next appointment⁵

