



## Case Management: Practical Steps to a Win-Win Relationship Between Case Managers and Physicians

Excerpted from *The Case Manager's Handbook* by Catherine Mullahy

The Frequently Asked section will return in the Fall edition of Hygeia Headlines

- • • Develop an understanding of the physicians' practice setting - When is the physician in the Operating Room? What is the best time to call the physician's office? Who is the best contact in the office? Sometimes, a nurse or receptionist can provide a quick answer if you frame a clear question over the phone.
- • • Send the physician credible information about you and your role. Include your credentials.
- • • Present yourself as a collaborative partner, a right-hand associate. Assure the physician that you will not be second-guessing him or her every day about every patient.
- • • Make it easy for the physician to give you the information you need. Type a questionnaire requesting the specific information. Include a copy of an appropriate signed release of information from the patient. In preparing your questions, remember that you are trying to avoid responses that will have to be dictated to a receptionist and typed, delaying a prompt response. Do everything you can so all the physician has to do is generate clear answers. Use e-mail as a communication tool, if the doctor prefers it.
- • • Do not trust your memory. Maintain a physician database to document specialty areas, preferred communication patterns, and previous experience.
- • • For a broader perspective, attend a physicians' conference or pick up publications written for physicians, such as Physicians Practice Digest to understand treatment patterns.
- • • Hone your diplomacy skills. Perhaps you discover a patient is taking medication that has an adverse effect in combination with another pill. He may be using over-the-counter medication or have forgotten to mention a drug he has been on for 10 years to the physician. Make it clear that you are interested in the best outcome, not in pointing a finger, when you uncover a bad situation. Document your concern as a partner, without laying blame, unless you are confronted by overt negligence.

## Contact Hygeia...

### PAYER MARKETING DEPARTMENT

877-540-9788 (toll free in North America) or 305-594-9291 ext 2265 | email: [payerpartner@hygeia.net](mailto:payerpartner@hygeia.net)

### CLIENT SERVICES

888-249-4342 (toll free in North America) or 416-595-1094

### CORPORATE HEADQUARTERS

877-540-9788 (toll free in North America or 305-594-9291 | email: [info@hygeia.net](mailto:info@hygeia.net)



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Editor: Michele I. Andwele