Welcome to the December 2013 issue of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) Pediatric Practice Managers Alliance (PPMA) monthly newsletter! All PPMA members are encouraged to submit articles. Articles should focus on some aspect of pediatric practice or clinic management and be between 300-900 words in length. The newsletter is not possible without the excellent articles written by PPMA members so please consider submitting an article by sending it to Jose Lopez, Manager, Practice Management, at jlopez@aap.org.

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**PPMA MEMBERSHIP**

PPMA membership has increased from 99 members at the beginning of 2014, to approximately 145 members as of December 1st! A recruitment campaign was recently held for lapsed members, thank you and welcome to those of you who renewed or recently joined! If you know of anyone who might be interested in joining PPMA, feel free to share the [PPMA Web page](http://www.aap.org) with them.

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**DISNEY INSTITUTE**

The PPMA held a session of the award-winning Disney Institute program on Thursday, October 24, 2013, prior to the 2013 AAP National Conference and Exhibition. The program was on Disney’s Approach to Quality Service and reached capacity with 94 members attending, consisting of pediatricians, pediatric practice managers and staff. While the program did not cater specifically to pediatrics, 90% of the attendees rated the program as Good to Excellent and shared plans to change their practices by implementing lessons learned. Thank you to everyone who was able to attend. An article on the Disney Institute will published in the January 2014 edition of AAP News.

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**2013 AAP NATIONAL CONFERENCE & EXHIBITION**

The 2013 PPMA Program, which focused on patient engagement, had a record turnout this year with approximately 130 members in attendance. The Section on Administration and Practice Management (SOAPM) H Program, which focused on emerging technologies, also had a record turnout with approximately 150 members in attendance. A history of the Section was presented at the Annual SOAPM Luncheon, which honored SOAPM Founding Member Edward J. Saltzman, MD, FAAP, who was in attendance. A copy of this presentation will be posted on the SOAPM Web site shortly.

Thank you to those of you who attended the Second Annual Friends of Children Fund Social Fundraiser,
which featured a luau show. Not only was the event a lot of fun but raised $5,136 for the Friends of Children Fund!

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**SOAPM-PPMA PRACTICE MANAGEMENT WEBINARS**

SOAPM & PPMA are hosting free webinars each month focusing on different areas of practice management. The webinars are recorded and made available to members who cannot attend live to view at their convenience. To view a recording of the webinars previously held, click on the title below.

**Have a Social Media Presence While Managing a Thriving Pediatric Practice**

**ACA Update for Practicing Pediatricians**

Please join us for the next free monthly SOAPM-PPMA practice management webinar which will be held on December 11, 2013 from 7:30 - 8:30 pm EST as Kathy Cain, MD, FAAP and Sue Kressly, MD, FAAP provide information on how to prepare for ICD-10 Implementation from a business and practice perspective. This webinar will identify potential problems during the life cycle of a claim during the ICD-10 transition period, operational considerations in the event of delayed claims processing, and provide practice and business suggestions you can implement in advance to prepare your practice for a successful transition. [Register now!]

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**AAP RESOURCES**

The AAP has a number of resources to assist you. Listed below are a few for your consideration:

**Practice Support Page**, provides resources on coding, financing, private payer, practice management, quality improvement, health information technology, and more provide support for your practice operations

**AAP Coding Hotline**, which can assist you with Coding Questions

**Hassle Factor Form**, to report insurance administrative and claims processing concerns

**Webinars**, a listing of all AAP webinars by topic

As always, if you have questions or need assistance, feel free to contact Jose Lopez, Manager, Practice Management, at jlopez@aap.org or 847/434-4089.

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**IS YOUR COMPANY’S CULTURE HINDERING YOUR PROFITABILITY?**

**Brandon Betancourt, MBA, PPMA Leadership Team Members**

I come from a non-medical business world where most conversation centers around profit, revenue, budgets, marketing, sales and things like that. In the private practice world, mentioning profit or revenue is almost prohibited as if it was a kind of taboo.

I remember being a little taken aback when people in the healthcare business would talk about “profit” and they would lower their voices and look around and whisper the words “making money” to ensure nobody outside of our conversation heard the money reference. In our practice, we take a completely different approach. In our practice, we don’t apologize for our pursuit of profitability. We are very upfront with both patients and our staff about the need to be profitable.

**We view “profitability” as a responsibility.**

Why? Because a broke doctor does not do any body any good. Profitability allows the practice to hire the best docs, hire the best staff, buy the best equipment, send staff to training, pay for docs’ CME’s and all the other things that go along with ensuring patients receive the best medical care possible.
Top notch medical care is expensive. We believe so strongly in this, that in our practice, we discuss profitability in practice’s core values document. Here is an excerpt from our company’s charter:

*In order to carry out our mission, we recognize that every staff member must take every opportunity to decrease cost, to increase efficiency, and earn revenues that support our team, our practice and our patients.*

In today’s health care climate, practice employee must be comfortable with talking about money. They need to know that not only is it okay, but a necessity.

**Thus, I suggest it is important to “bake” revenue into the culture of the practice.** Fundamentally, this approach sets the expectation. Employees understand that collecting copayments and balances at the time of service is vital to the practice’s mission.

By openly talking about money, employees understand that the money that comes in to the practice is not the doctor’s money, but it is everybody’s money. Collecting from both insurance companies and parents is where the practice gets the money to pay everybody’s salary. In primary care, this is even more critical because we are in a low margin, high volume business.

And it is not just collections. Keeping down cost on unnecessary expenses is just as important. In pediatrics, for example, drawing up vaccines incorrectly, dropping a dose on the floor, or simply keeping poor inventory can make the difference between profitability and loss.

**Want to avoid revenue leaks and increase profitability? Start talking about money.** Embed it into the practice’s culture. Please don’t misunderstand me with this point. I am not suggesting that we only think about money. That is not what I am suggesting. After all, we are still healthcare providers and things like empathy, caring, understanding, healing, compassion, and sacrifice are all part of what we do day to day.

But what I am saying is that if there is not enough “margin”, docs and their staff will not be around to be empathetic, caring, compassionate, and heal patients. In other words, we cannot help people in need if the practice is also in need.

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**MY EXPERIENCE AT THE 2013 AAP NATIONAL CONFERENCE: GETTING OUT OF YOUR COMFORT ZONE**

*Theresa Cleveland, PPMA Leadership Team Members*

I have attended the AAP National Conference and Exhibition and PPMA Program in the past and became so engaged and impressed that I joined the PPMA. Two years ago became a member of the PPMA Leadership Team. At last year’s National Conference in New Orleans, I was able to stay in the back of the room, learn from my colleagues, and collect question cards. This year was a different story. It was my turn to present and speak in front of my colleagues, pediatricians and vendors at the PPMA Program.

I decided I would talk about employee engagement, standards, and accountability. I wrote notes about what I wanted to speak about, I had five months but true to my form, I waited to write the presentation three days before flying to Orlando. Making my son crazy attempting to create a PowerPoint, I backed it up on a flash drive and headed to Orlando. I practiced in front of pillows in my hotel room, kept making adjustments, added true life examples, and thought I was ready. The night before our program, we went to the room to see how it was set up. Granted this was after a very long day of meetings and the Disney Institute, but I stood on the stage at the podium and sheer terror overcame me. I was then worried about what the Disney Institute referred to as a ‘protein spill’ (well, you can figure it out) and I was not sure I could get through the presentation. At that point, Holly Parlavecchio, the PPMA Leadership Team Chairperson, joked she was going to put a tracking device on me to find me if I did not show up since I had not shared with them what hotel I was staying at. I went back to my room, practiced in front of my pillow audience, and got a full four hours of sleep.
The morning of the PPMA program, I hoped for the best. I do not remember the first few minutes of my presentation but once I got a few smiles and nods from the crowd, I decided I could get through it. The audience was so kind and I want to thank anyone reading this that was there. My first public presentation was complete and I felt pretty good after doing this.

What I would like you to think about is no matter how tough something seems, make yourself get out of your comfort zone and do it. Whether it is speaking in public for the first time, asking questions at a conference that you attend, or pushing for what you believe in at your practice, it is worth it and you will be so proud of yourself.

In addition to the PPMA Program, I also attended the Disney Institute, learning great customer service skills. The one thought I took back to my office was to remind my staff that they should think of themselves as always being on stage, as everything they say or do will be heard or seen. It is not always easy to do, but a great reminder to your staff. There are also always great breakout sessions to attend throughout the conference.

I hope to see you at next year’s National Conference in San Diego! We have a great PPMA program already planned—Financial Policies for Your Practice.