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Issue 21

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Latham Consulting Group

Latham Consulting Group is one of the nation's leading management consulting firms serving medical groups. Established in 1988, we have worked with medical groups of all sizes and specialties, providing them with a full range of consulting services to include:

- Strategic Planning Facilitation
- Governance
- Physician Compensation
- Merger Facilitation

If you would like to learn more about how we can help your group make decisions, resolve conflict, and move forward, contact:

Will Latham at 704.365.8889 or wllatham@lathamconsulting.com.

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For Managers and
Physician Leaders of
Group Practices

Medical Group Advisor

Make Decisions...
Resolve Conflict...
Move Forward.

Your Group Can Make Decisions...and Make Them Stick

Decision-making is hard for almost every medical group. It's made even tougher by an unstated "agreement" in many groups that goes something like this: *"If I didn't vote for it, or I don't like it, I don't have to follow the group's decision."*

This kind of thinking can kill a group. Why waste time making decisions if supporting the decision is optional?

What can a group do to improve its ability to make decisions and thereby improve its ability to govern itself?

Improvement will only come if the group asks and answers three fundamental questions. We believe these are the most important questions that any group can ask itself:

1. **How will the group make decisions?** In our

Mergers Are Back!

After a several year slow-down medical group mergers are back! Physicians and managers are increasingly recognizing that mergers are one of the few methods available to strengthen a medical group's position in an increasingly hostile environment.

If your group is considering a merger, be sure to visit our website and see our special report entitled *Medical Group Mergers—Strategies for Success*.

experience, the best option is to seek consensus first, and then vote if consensus cannot be reached. Often the President is charged with the responsibility of determining when the group should move to vote.

2. **What is expected of each physician once a decision has been made?** The answer to this question is *critical*. The best groups agree that once a decision has been made in the agreed-upon decision-making

method, every physician (whether they agree with the decision or not) *will fully and actively support the decision*, to include encouraging others to support the decision. "Fully support" means doing what they have agreed to do, actively promoting implementation, and not sabotaging the decision.

3. **What are a physician's options if they don't like the decision?**

>Continued in the Newsletter section of our website—www.lathamconsulting.com

A Code of Conduct Improves Behavior

One would think that everyone's definition of "professional behavior" would be about the same. Unfortunately, this is not the case for some physicians.

Problematic physician behavior can range from criticizing other physicians in front of employees to striking a patient.

Unfortunately, most medical groups have a hard time addressing such situations. If the group has never agreed upon a set of expected behaviors, physicians in the group resist challenging other physicians about their inappropriate behavior.

One way to address this situation is for the group to develop a "Code of Conduct."

A Code of Conduct indicates the agreed upon standards of behavior expected of a member of the group. It sets out, in general terms, the standards and duties which it is reasonable to expect a member of the group to observe.

When properly developed this document can be used to effectively reign in problematic physician behavior. Everyone has fair warning about what the agreed upon expectations are. Tolerance for outliers is reduced. Group leadership can act because an intervention is no longer seen as one person's opinion versus another's.

What should a Code of Conduct address?

>Continued in the Newsletter section of our website—www.lathamconsulting.com