Charting Deadline!!!

by Buddy Kurz, President

While talking to people at our booth at the ADA meeting in San Francisco we heard several mentions of a 2014 deadline for going paperless. We have also heard from a few of our clients who have expressed anxiety over this looming "Charting Cliff". Since we had heard nothing about this deadline and hate to be the last to know, we did a little research on the subject. According to the ADA regarding the use of an EHR, **"There are no federal mandates or deadlines for dentists who do not submit claims to Medicare, or who do not see large numbers of Medicaid patients."** When talking about going paperless, what we are really talking about is called an EHR or Electronic Health Record. If you are a Kaiser patient, you are familiar with this. All of your records are stored electronically and are available at any Kaiser location. (I am occasionally asked why Datacon doesn't do that and I am quick to point out that this cost Kaiser something like 4 billion dollars to implement.) The goal of the federal government (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services) is to have all healthcare providers transition to these systems. The intent is to provide better patient care and reduce healthcare costs. The sharing of patient health history, prescriptions, etc. between providers would be less prone to error, simplify the demands placed on patients and enable better preventative care.

Like photos of Sasquatch and the Loch Ness Monster, the picture of the timeline for required use of an EHR is rather fuzzy. Currently, the only federal mandate is for providers billing for Medicare and Medicaid. Beginning in 2015, if you have not adopted a certified EHR system, your *Medicare* reimbursements will be reduced by 1%. The deduction rate increases to 2% in 2016, 3%, in 2017, etc. The ADA in conjunction with the ANSI (American National Standards Institute) are busy developing their recommendations for just what features and capabilities should be included in an EHR system for a dental practice. We are in communication with the ADA and have received a copy of the draft of this report. We will continue to monitor the progress of this important project. If you are interested in more information visit the ADA website. See http://www.ada.org/5348.aspx as a starting point.

So what is Datacon doing about this? The first and most important step was to transition our software from the old Alphamicro platform to something that would support the sorts of secure communication and storage that is required for systems of this type. At this time, most of our clients have transitioned to using a Mac server. Many of you are now using patient folders to store digital copies of paper charts, consent forms, images, and patient communication. We have quite a few offices entering chart notes thru our software and we are continuing to improve on this functionality. Your switch to paperless doesn't need to happen all at once and we are encouraging our users to gradually start taking advantage of the features we currently offer as we continue to improve the software based on your needs and feedback.

Lab Case Improvements

In August of this year we added lab case tracking to the software. The response to this has been very positive. Our users are excited about it and some have gone so far as to put a bunch of old cases on the system to take advantage of the reporting capabilities. As always, we have listened to your feedback and as a result there have been some updates. We have made it easier to put an estimated delivery date on a case that will be changed to the actual delivery date when the "Delivered" check box is clicked. The list of all lab cases now has tabs at the top that allow you to review all cases, sent or re-sent cases, delivered or re-done cases, or completed cases. This list now also supports searching for records based on part of the patient name.

Appointments & Recall

The software includes the option to keep completed appointments on file after the attached treatment plan is posted. This option can be edited in Miscellaneous Options under Posting Options. We have recently improved on this by making the software hide completed appointments in most places. Appointments on the list of today's patients will be dimmed after the appointment is posted.
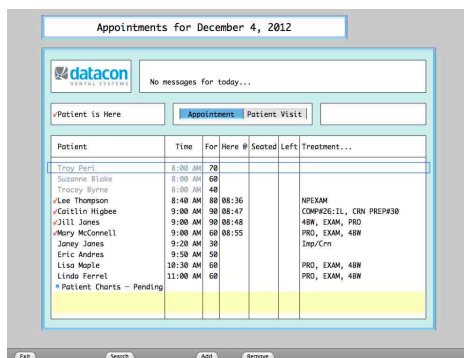

Appointments on the schedule that have been completed will now display with a shaded background.

The purpose of all this is to provide another way to access the charting screens after treatments have been posted. Completed appointments can be shown on the list of Appointments and Recall and can be included in the recall reports. In addition to the new option to show completed appointments, the list of appointments and recall now has tabs at the top to allow a quick way to select Scheduled Appointments, Recall and Missed Appointments, or All Appointments and Recall. These options and others are still available using search.

The Recall Analysis Report now includes the ability to sort scheduled appointments by the month or day they were scheduled or by the initials of the user who did the scheduling. The range of dates being reported can be either the dates when scheduling was done or the date of the appointment.
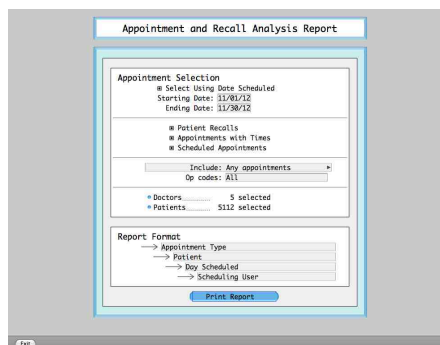
To use this new reporting feature you must enable the option to add notes to scheduled appointments to track changes. This can be found in miscellaneous options under Scheduling Options.

Happy Holidays from Datacon

So many holidays, so little time! It would save us a lot of trouble if you could hang this card someplace around the office and refer to it all year long.

Thank You

As 2012 comes to a close, we would like thank you for the opportunity to work with you. We really do appreciate the personal relationship we have with you and feel privileged to be a part of your practice. This last year saw many changes with several new features and enhancements to our software. Your input, suggestions and enthusiasm have been invaluable. We look forward to working with you and to many great things to come in the New Year.

We sincerely wish you and yours a joyous and happy Holiday Season!