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## Preparing for Practice: Warming up Before the Game

Within the past month, you have graduated from residency and joined an academic institution, a private practice, or a practice with a mixture of both. As you join a new group of physicians, consider the following questions to help you get a proper start.

### *What does it take to be a member of a group?*

The physicians you are joining will most likely be different from the group you are leaving. Nearly all of you will join an established practice, and your new group may employ members whose work experience ranges from a few months to more than 20 years. Each practice will likely have preexisting political alliances and an established reputation- find your role gradually. Although you may enter practice with the most up-to-date literature knowledge, many of you enter with the least practical experience. The following two articles are good resources for those adjusting to a new practice environment. Dr. Alexander gives some great advice in his article "[Private Practice Environment Presents Change, Challenge.](#)" With concepts applicable to both private and academic practice, Dr. Alexander briefly explores the many hats worn by an emergency physician.



### *Am I fast enough?*



Worried about your efficiency compared to the other members of your group? Chances are you'll do just fine. In "[Efficiency in the Emergency Department](#)" Dr. Beel gives tips on how to provide great care and keep your patients and staff satisfied. It is important to remember that directors often critique physicians who are either too fast or too slow.

### ***What do I need to know about coding and billing?***



You may have entered medicine to help people, but it is also a business. Your group depends on your billing, determined by your documentation, to meet the financial bottom line. If you haven't yet learned the basics of coding and billing, now's the time. ACEP's introductory information paper "[The Fundamentals of Reimbursement: What Every Graduating Resident Should Know Before Starting Practice](#)" is a great place to get started. As the paper notes, in the ED the majority of services provided are evaluation and management codes. Familiarity with these codes will ensure that you are reimbursed for the care you provided. Your next step is to learn Medicare's documentation guidelines, since these rules dictate the majority of ED charges. Find out if your group follows the 1995 or 1997 documentation guidelines, and then find those [guidelines](#) on the ACEP website.

ACEP's Academic Affairs Committee developed Webinars relating to reimbursement; topics include [Nuts and Bolts of Relative Value Units \(RVUs\) and Reimbursement](#) by Michael Granovsky, MD, FACEP; [Top Documentation Mistakes](#) by Gregory L. Henry, MD, FACEP and Gillian Schmitz, MD, FACEP. Finally, Thom Mayer, MD, FACEP, provides information on [Incentive Based Compensation: Show Me the Money](#). These Webinars include discussion questions to facilitate learning for each topic. You can also visit [ACEP's website](#) for additional reimbursement resources.

### ***What else do I need to know?***

YPS' "[The Top 25 Things You Need to Do Before Your First Day](#)" covers what you should do to help you prepare for a smooth first shift. We hope you review this checklist with your medical director if you have not already.

### ***Group Obligations***

Just as you have obligations as an incoming member to a group, your group has an obligation to orient you so you are well prepared to start as a full member of the group. Your medical director should review the topics from the *Top 25* list and last month's *In Transition* issue on the information superhighway with you. If your medical director is unable or unwilling to explain these requirements to you, remember that your boss has a boss whether it is the other partners, chair of the academic department, or regional medical director of the corporate management group. Don't hesitate to ask the tough questions until you get a clear answer.

Get ready, take a deep breath, and know your teachers trained you well. Try to enjoy yourself, and take the time to observe and adjust to your environment. Good luck!

### ***Next month...Playing the Game.***

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