

By Cynthia Matossian, MD



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Settling to the penny, every day

It's more than good business. We also can better serve our patients.

Our office has two sections dedicated to the front desk area. The first, nearest our entryway, serves as our check-in point. The second, our checkout, is reserved for payments and making return appointments.

Staff must settle to the penny, every day. We don't let patients leave without paying for out-of-pocket items such as contact lenses or copays, despite pleas of I-don't-have-my-wallet.

Settling to the penny isn't difficult: It takes practice, patience and persistence.

WHY WE COLLECT TO THE PENNY

1. Like it or not, ophthalmologists are running a business. If you don't keep track of what's coming in and going out, you won't succeed.
2. The fraud point aside, if you allow staff to forgo taking five copayments a day, each worth \$20 — that's more than the cost of an Nd:YAG laser by year's end.
3. Patients who don't pay in your office develop amnesia (See "Odds of getting paid post-service, or a bird in your hand.") Moreover, it

costs money to try and collect what patients owe you.

4. The smarter we act with patient collections from the get-go, the less frustrating it is for the patients and the better it is for the practice.

HOW TO GET THOSE PENNIES

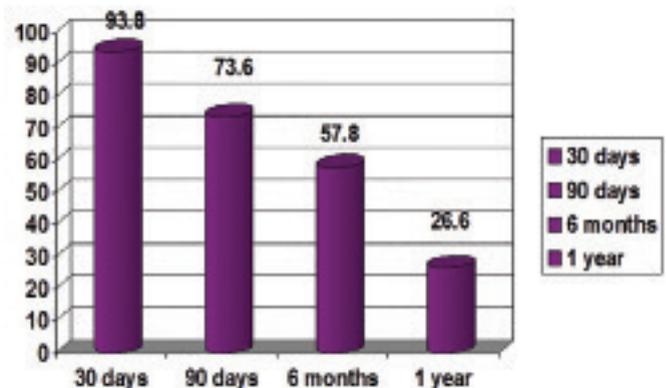
Out-of-pocket tests and services such as refractions or Optomap (in lieu of dilation for our younger, healthy patients) show up on the EMR-generated bill at the close of the office visit. Our staff collects payments as patients check out. For surgeries that entail advanced technology implants, we insist on payment at least three to five

business days ahead of the surgery date.

We accept all forms of payment, including Google Wallet, Apple Pay, credit and debit cards, personal checks and cash. We don't accept "No, I can't pay now." Our staff is friendly but firm. They get extensive training on commercial insurances and Medicare policies, so they can't get snookered with, "my insurance will cover it" when it won't.

Settling to the penny is more than good business sense. You and your staff delivered quality care. You should be fully compensated for the services rendered in a timely fashion. **om**

Odds of getting paid post-service, or why that bird in your hand ...



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