

THIS MONTH: CO-ORDINATING DIARIES

MOST CONSULTANTS have at least one NHS secretary and some form of private practice administrative support. The challenge is to avoid double-booking their time and although they employ a number of personal and business diaries, this can be a nightmare, writes Alison Ryan.

Modern technology increasingly allows remote access to a single diary which can be used for personal and business appointments. So how best can you utilise this technology for seamless practice management?

■ Investigate technological support

Firstly, take a good look at the options available to you, from laptop access through the increasing number of wireless internet spots to the hand-held BlackBerry. If such technology is not cur-

rently an option, at least ensure that one point of contact holds the master diary.

■ Enable multiple access to a single diary

In this way, the consultant avoids the danger of being expected in two or more places at the same time.

■ Ensure booking protocols are understood by all secretaries

Also, set secure logins so only you and your chosen delegates can review your diary and add appropriate appointments.

■ Liaise regularly with all users about away days

Running an efficient practice is all about good communication. The more notice of absence, the better for all involved.

■ Keep it current

Establish a regime and stick to it.

It is all too easy to fall into bad habits, promising yourself that you will catch up later. Try to commit to having your diary up to date at least six weeks in advance.

■ Synchronise

Practice management specialist PHF uses industry-standard Microsoft Exchange technology to store consultants' diaries and recommends this approach.

This means you can synchronise your Outlook diary at home or at work, as well as your PDA (for example, Palm, iPAQ or other Pocket PC). This synchronisation can be carried out whenever you choose.

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