NewSource
4th Quarter Edition

"Then the Grinch thought of something he hadn't before! What if Christmas, he thought, doesn't come from a store. What if Christmas ... perhaps ... means a little bit more!"

– Dr. Seuss, How the Grinch Stole Christmas!

LRPHO NewSource is a Quarterly Publication for our Providers, Office Staff, and Contracted Facility Members

Five Ways to Stay Positive when Practice Pressure Rises
[from Physicianspractice.com by Keith A. Reynolds]

Running a medical office has never been easy, but today's headwinds - staffing shortages, razor-thin margins and an endless queue of prior authorizations - push many teams to the breaking point. More than half of physicians now report feeling burned out, according to the latest Medical Economics Physician Burnout Survey, and administrative staff aren't far behind. Lingering supply-chain problems inflate everything from syringes to surgical gloves, while payer audits drain hours that could be spent with patients. The emotional toll is real: nearly two in three practice managers told Physicians Practice that workplace mood directly influences their decision to stay.

Yet positivity is one of the few levers leaders can pull without waiting for an insurer, a legislator or the Fed to act. An upbeat culture drives measurable returns because optimistic teams communicate better and recover faster from setbacks. Positivity isn't about ignoring problems; it's about framing them so solutions feel possible. These five tactics, grounded in real physician practices and current research, show how to cultivate hope and resilience without spending a dime. reasons why outsourcing may not be the right move for your medical practice.

Start Every Hurdle with Genuine Gratitude: Open each team huddle with a quick "win round." Ask staff to recognize a colleague who made their job easier or a patient interaction that felt good. Even brief, specific praise triggers the brain's reward circuitry and builds psychological safety.

Flip the Negativity Bias Together: Humans instinctively scan for threats, so complaints about EHR glitches or no-shows can dominate hallway chatter. Acknowledge the bias, then ask: What can we control right now? Reframing obstacles as design challenges cut burnout scores in one family practice within a quarter.

Teach Emotional-Intelligence Micro-Skills: Labeling feelings, pausing before replies and checking assumptions are low-tech ways to curb conflict and foster empathy. Clinicians who practiced five minutes of EQ drills daily recorded a 20-point jump in well-being scores after eight weeks.

Protect Purposeful Micro-Breaks: Five-minute resets - stretching, breath work, stepping outside - help blunt the cortisol spikes that fuel cynicism, yet breaks disappear first when schedules implode. A Physicians Practice P2 Management Minute on boosting morale urges leaders to block short pauses right on daily templates; hospital systems that embedded two micro-breaks every four hours saw error rates drop 31 percent and turnover 12 percent in one year.

Give People More Control Than They Expect: Autonomy is a proven stress buffer. Let staff pilot scheduling tweaks, vote on new intake-form wording or rotate telehealth days. Participative management boosts engagement even in lean-budget clinics. Career-path discussions and cross-training deliver faster morale lifts than gift cards for improving employee satisfaction.

12 Days of Christmas at the Office

December 8th
Holiday kickoff!
WEAR RED & GREEN DAY!

December 9th
Run, run Rudolph!
WEAR YOUR FAVORITE WORKOUT CLOTHES!

December 10th
Holiday hair, don't care!
WEAR A FESTIVE HAT OR BOW!

December 11th
Over the river and thru the woods!
WEAR CAMOUFLAGE OR A FLANNEL SHIRT!

December 12th
Holly jolly christmas!
WEAR YOUR FAVORITE HOLIDAY SHIRT!

December 15th
Ho ho ho vs Grinch day!
DRESS AS TEAM SANTA OR TEAM GRINCH!

December 16th
All is bright!
PUT ON SOME CHRISTMAS LIGHT-UP BLING!

December 17th
Sleigh the day!
WEAR YOUR TACKY CHRISTMAS SWEATER!

December 18th
Toyland thursday!
PUT ON SOME ELF WORKSHOP HEADGEAR—ANTLERS OR SANTA HAT!

December 19th
Long winters nap!
WEAR YOUR CHRISTMAS PAJAMAS!

December 22nd
Twas the day before parties!
WEAR FUN CHRISTMAS SOCKS!

December 23rd
That's a wrap!
GIFT WRAP YOURSELF!

Wishing you infinite Peace, Hope & Love this Christmas!

Erica, Julie, Leigh Anne & Shaw

AI in the Real World: Practical Tips for a Smarter Practice

[from Physicianspractice.com by Austin Litrell]

From automated charting to intelligent scheduling, AI can save hours each week — if used wisely. These field-tested strategies help practice leaders get the benefits of automation without disrupting patient care or overwhelming staff.

<u>Know what AI actually does in your workflow</u>: Before adopting new tools, map out which tasks consume the most time — documentation, scheduling, billing or follow-up. Then identify where AI can realistically help. Voice-to-text tools, smart scheduling assistants and claim-prediction models each solve different problems. Knowing your pain points first ensures you don't buy technology you don't need.

<u>Start small, measure impact</u>: AI adoption doesn't have to be all-or-nothing. Pilot one feature, like automated charting or appointment optimization, and track metrics like staff hours saved or patient wait-time reduction. Gradual rollout allows you to test reliability and accuracy before committing to a larger system.

<u>Demand transparency from vendors</u>: Ask vendors how their algorithms were trained and validated. A "black-box" approach can hide biases or errors that affect clinical accuracy.
Reputable companies should be able to explain what data sets were used, how models are updated, and whether humans review AI-generated outputs.

Verify compliance and security early: AI tools often handle protected health information. Confirm HIPAA compliance, data-encryption standards and whether the vendor's cloud storage is certified. A secure system protects patient trust — and shields your practice from costly penalties or reputational harm.

Keep humans in the loop: Automation should enhance, not replace, clinical judgment.
Encourage staff to review AI-generated notes or diagnostic suggestions before finalizing records. Practices that maintain human oversight tend to achieve better outcomes and fewer documentation errors.

Align AI with staff training: Even the best AI fails without user adoption. Provide short, role-specific training for front-desk staff, nurses and physicians. Explain not just how to use new tools, but why they matter — reducing burnout and improving efficiency.

Plan for integration, not disruption: Make sure new software communicates with your EHR, billing and telehealth platforms. Poor integration leads to duplicate entry and staff frustration. Ask vendors whether they support APIs or require third-party plug-ins, and clarify maintenance responsibilities.

Budget beyond the sticker price: Subscription fees often exclude add-ons like advanced transcription or analytics dashboards. Clarify upgrade costs, data-migration fees and support charges. Understanding total ownership cost helps avoid unpleasant surprises months down the road.

Evaluate ROI and adjust: Set benchmarks: How much time does the system save? How accurate are transcripts or scheduling predictions? Use data to decide whether to scale up, switch vendors, or revert to manual processes that still work best.

Stay informed — we're moving fast: AI regulations, reimbursement rules and capabilities are evolving rapidly. Assign one staff member to track updates from CMS, ONC and major vendors. Regular check-ins help you remain compliant and competitive as technology advances.

7 TIPS TO MANAGE STRESS & MENTAL HEALTH DURING THE HOLIDAYS

PLAN AHEAD
Have a plan in place for all your holiday tasks and activities.

BE REALISTIC
Don't stress yourself out by trying to create the perfect holiday.

STAY ACTIVE
Exercise is a great way to deal with holiday stress, and anxiety.

DON'T WORRY
Don't feel obligated to complete every small thing on your list.

JUST SAY NO
If you have too much on your plate, let your friends and family know.

SET ASIDE DIFFERENCES
Enjoy other's company and talk about topics that bring happiness.

ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR FEELINGS
Have a plan in place for all your holiday tasks and activities.

Ten Ways to Bring Joy to your Practice Staff

[from Physicianspractice.com by Keith A. Reynolds]

1. <u>Ask, Listen and Act on Feedback</u>: Move from "suggestion box" to true participative management. Before rolling out any workflow change, solicit frontline ideas in daily huddles, publish the top three suggestions on a whiteboard and close the loop within a week. Employees who see their input reflected in policy score higher on engagement surveys and are more likely to propose innovations that save time and money.

2. <u>Recognize Great Work in Real Time</u>: Dollar-free praise beats stale year-end bonuses. Public shout-outs at a morning huddle or via an oversized card signed by peers reinforce behaviors that improve patient flow and safety. Tie each kudo to a specific accomplishment so staff connect the dots between effort and outcome.

3. <u>Celebrate Small Wins and Birthdays</u>:   Micro-celebrations trump a lone holiday party. The classic "Cinco de Mayo taco bar" or an impromptu cupcake run after a spotless audit tells staff you notice the grind. Those light moments strengthen social bonds that translate into better teamwork when the waiting room is overflowing.

4. <u>Offer Genuine Scheduling Flexibility</u>: Extra PTO, rotating early-out Fridays or seasonal compressed shifts cost less than recruiting a replacement. Flexible scheduling keeps mid-career parents in the workforce and can even delay retirements, preserving institutional knowledge while lifting morale.

5. <u>Make the Break Room a Refuge</u>:   Healthy snacks, natural light and a phone-free policy turn 15 minutes of downtime into true recovery. Keeping the refrigerator stocked with fruit and yogurt is a low-budget perk that employees consistently list among their favorite morale boosters.

6. <u>Invest in Professional Growth</u>: Stagnation is the enemy of joy. Map a modest CME budget to every role, fund at least one conference or certification per employee each year, and spotlight success stories at staff meetings. Practices that budget for training report higher morale and fewer costly coding errors.

7. <u>Delegate with Purpose, Not Despera</u>tion: Match assignments to strengths and clarify roles so no one feels set up to fail. Clear expectations create "psychological safety," a proven driver of high-performing medical teams and a buffer against burnout.

8. <u>Lead with Transparency and Empathy</u>: Trust grows when leadership shares key metrics, explains tough decisions and asks, "How can we help?" Thoughtful, two-way communication is one of the quickest ways to boost engagement and cut gossip that erodes culture.

9. <u>Give Employees a Voice in Quality-Improvement Projects</u>: Invite schedulers, billers and medical assistants to co-design process fixes—whether a new triage script or a quicker prior-auth checklist. Staff who help craft solutions adopt them faster and police the workflow themselves, freeing managers to lead rather than chase compliance.

10. <u>Inject Fun into Routine Days</u>: Ugly Sweater contests, step-count challenges or "puppy-visit Fridays" (partner with a local shelter) deliver quick dopamine hits that last long after the prize. Practices that weave lighthearted events into the calendar report lower absenteeism and higher patient-experience scores