



TO CODE OR NOT TO CODE



No, not charges - the phones. It is a great debate in most practices as to whether or not the phones should be coded at lunch. While it is a nice gesture to give staff time to eat together, or in some cases quiet time to do ever present paper work, there is a bigger issue to take into consideration - patient access.

A number of patients work for employers with strict rules about making personal calls on company time or being "off task" to conduct personal business. Scheduling a doctor's appointment while on the job may violate those rules, leaving patients to attempt to reach their physicians during their lunch break. Reaching an answering machine/service and being told the practice is closed for the next hour or two (we've even heard for the next 2 1/2 hours!) inhibits their ability to reach you. And since most practices don't uncode their phones until after 8 a.m., and roll them again around 5 p.m., these patients struggle to reach you. While some are diligent in their attempts, others are using this as a sign that their business is more welcome elsewhere.

If your present volume is not to the level you would like it, look at this one item as a way to increase accessibility and availability. And, you can do it without increasing your costs! Simply stagger lunch schedules so at least one employee is available to answer phones at all times during the business day.

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