Preface

Most pathologists know almost nothing about practice management when they take their first regular positions. Despite many years of training, they risk financial stability, practice harmony, and professional satisfaction through trusting what may be categorized as a “gut feeling” about a practice opportunity. While some pathologists then learn through the “School of Hard Knocks,” others gradually learn practice management through their early years in practice and progressively take control of their professional lives.

Practice management is a broad topic encompassing such diverse areas as billing and contracting, strategic planning, personnel and human resource issues, decision-making, and productivity. There are basic factual components, but the application of the principles of management is situation specific and best honed by experience. To increase the challenges, these factual aspects change as the health-care system changes and as the practice of pathology evolves.

Though highly trained specialist physicians, pathologists typically receive limited useful instruction and experience in practice management during residency and fellowship. Also, for most pathologists, the initial lure of medicine and pathology in particular was not arcane billing rules, the finer points of contracting, or a desire to address personnel issues. However, practice management issues are critical to day-to-day pathology practice, impacting quality, practice success, and professional satisfaction.

This book will provide relatively short didactic overviews of topics and concepts complemented by cases drawn from the experiences of the various authors. The cases are intended to illustrate approaches to common problems, provide a basis for discussion in a training environment or, for the more experienced leader, to stimulate thinking when faced with a particular practice management issue. We learned a lot from each other while assembling the didactics and cases for this book. We hope your experience is the same.

The authors have had a range of experiences as practicing pathologists, attorneys, practice managers, and consultants. We have also taught courses for the College of American Pathologists, United States and Canadian Academy of Pathology, American Society for Clinical Pathology, and American Pathology Foundation, along with other organizations, and feel blessed to have had the opportunities. But our best
experiences have come from those with whom we have worked and networked. Our friends and colleagues have been the best teachers and sounding boards. Our thanks to you all.

This publication is designed to provide general background information to readers regarding a wide range of business, legal, financial, and billing topics. The publication provides general information rather than specific business, legal, financial, or billing advice. Because it is necessary to apply business, legal, and accounting and billing rules and principles to specific facts, always consult your professional advisor before using the information in this publication as a basis for a specific action.

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