

## Taking the Pain Out of Office Calls

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TCMS Member

**P**ain is a complex problem that requires personalized solutions. When I joined Austin Pain Associates in 2003, I became part of a practice committed to providing unique options for our patients and a multi-disciplinary approach to pain management.

Proper assessment is essential. A person can experience pain for any number of reasons and may require a combination of therapies in order to regain control of their lives. Our facility uses both non-invasive and interventional techniques including injections, percutaneous disc decompression, vertebroplasty, physical therapy, therapeutic massage, psychological therapy, medication management and advanced neurostimulation and intrathecal pump implantation. Determining the proper course of treatment requires communication, information and trust. That's how PatientPlus has helped our practice; we're able to keep our focus on the patient.

PatientPlus professionals answer our phones and provide the first level of response. We partnered with PatientPlus more than a year ago when the growth of our practice began to stretch our internal resources. We were receiving 400 to 500 calls per day with some very overtaxed nurses answering calls and questions from patients. With PatientPlus, all of that went away and our nurses were able to focus on direct care more than ever before.

Even better, we've been able to ensure consistency in handling phone inquiries.

Many of the calls we receive involve reinforcing directions or procedures for a particular treatment. One of the benefits of PatientPlus is that it's an algorithmic approach where representatives access pre-determined information approved for a

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
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specific type of inquiry. Nothing is missed, nothing is left out, and patients who call with the same question will get the same answer. PatientPlus services have translated into better patient care, and callers get the information they need.

This manner of handling calls has also readjusted patient expectations. Previously, people were calling hoping to receive medical care over the phone without the benefit of a physician's examination. With PatientPlus, we're scheduling appointments for those folks, so we can make informed medical decisions. The process also helps with documentation and ensures the patient will get the right treatment and the right information, and there's no worry about miscommunication. It's proven to be an unexpected benefit of our partnership.

Whether fielding a call from a vendor, expediting a referral, rescheduling a patient appointment, or assisting a caller with lab results, PatientPlus answers all calls to our

main number and processes those calls exactly per our detailed instructions. It is a key factor in creating a more organized workplace and has helped us retain valued members of our staff. For us, the service is an economical solution that has reduced the intangible costs associated with employee burnout and staff turnover. There is a noticeable difference in the work environment, and our people can provide our patients with the personal attention essential to the treatment of chronic pain.

We are happy with our decision to make PatientPlus part of the Austin Pain Associates team. I recommend their services to any medical practitioner seeking a more efficient, more productive work environment. They have proven to be a pain-free solution for our staff, our patients and our business. 

PatientPlus is a service available through the Medical Service Bureau. In addition to answering and processing daytime office calls offsite for large groups, it also provides completely customizable solutions for smaller offices. Office calls are routed to PatientPlus staff who follow custom protocols specifically designed for each client, which may include patient triage, appointment setting, insurance verification, and much more. For more information call 467-5200.