

MEDICAL CALL CENTER NEWS

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Don't Let Afternoon Fatigue Slow You Down

By Dr. David Tanton

If you are one of many medical call center agents who work during the day, you probably have very productive mornings. Then the clock strikes noon, and you head to lunch. Following lunch, you return to your desk, often feeling tired, drained, and less-than-productive. While the morning was filled with efficiency, now energy is plummeting fast and the afternoon slump has set in!

When you work in a medical call center, feeling alert can be critical to both your job performance, and your job security. Let's evaluate what causes the afternoon slump, and take steps to eliminate it. Following is the formula that will make the difference.

You Are What You Eat

- What you eat for lunch is important. A heavy meal means that an increased amount of energy will be diverted to the stomach for digestion, leaving less energy for your brain.
- The combination of foods you consume is also important. For example, meat and starches in combination are slow to digest. Eating fruit or drinking fruit juice with a meal greatly increases digestion time as well. On the other hand, eating a lighter lunch and chewing thoroughly speeds up digestion.
- If you find it difficult to stay awake at times, any medications you are taking might be the problem. Of the 200 most prescribed medications, 175 (87.5 percent) listed "fatigue" or "drowsiness" as possible side effects!
- Hypothyroidism, hypoglycemia, dehydration, or insufficient oxygen can all influence your mental capacity and your ability to remain alert.
- Anemia, caused by insufficient red blood cells, is one well-known contributor to fatigue. Taking a high-potency vitamin B-complex, along with 50 mg of Coenzyme Q₁₀, twice daily, (upon rising and at noon), can help maintain your energy level and prevent fatigue throughout the day.

You Deserve a Good Night's Sleep: Insufficient sleep can lead to carelessness regarding important medical data or other work-related errors. Adequate sleep affects your ability for efficient retention and recall. During sleep, healing and regeneration take place, enabling you to be healthier and more productive. Surprisingly, you won't accomplish more by sleeping fewer hours – you will actually be less productive during the day.

Attitude Makes the Difference: Your attitude plays an important role in beating lethargy and that afternoon slump. Nothing contributes to drowsiness faster than boredom, but this can often be eliminated with a minor attitude adjustment. You might consider striving to become Employee of the Month – every single month. If you are in hyperdrive, you might want to enjoy an afternoon

cup of green tea. It contains ingredients that produce more mentally productive alpha waves, which helps you stay focused.

On the phone or interacting with coworkers, always have a cheerful, upbeat attitude and strive to be a team player. By incorporating these recommendations, your afternoons can be every bit as productive as your mornings, and you can say good-bye to afternoon fatigue.

Contact Dr. David Tanton at www.dranton.com.



In the Cool of the Morning

By Peter DeHaan

I got up early this morning and, in the predawn, began pulling in cool 60-degree air into our warm abode. In short order the temperature dropped seven degrees to an agreeable 70, where it stayed most of the morning. Attired only in t-shirt and shorts, I was quite comfortable.

What is perplexing is that six months ago, in the midst of winter's fury, with the thermostat set at 72, I would layer on the clothes and still be cold. This is a strange personal phenomenon that occurs with predicted regularity each year as we cycle from summer to winter and back again.

I've never known why. One possibility is that since I like summer and dislike winter, it is a psychological response to my frame of mind – meaning that it is all in my head. I don't care for that theory.

Alternately, a physiological explanation is more palatable, but on what might I blame it? The answer is that I don't know. What I do know is that I like summer and am quite comfortable – and happy!

I wish the same for you.

Many Americans Still Confused About New Healthcare Reform

Not sure what's included and what's not in the new healthcare legislation signed into law by President Obama in March? You're not alone. More than 2,100 adults were given a list of eighteen reform items and asked to identify what's included and what's not included in the law. Only four items were correctly identified by the majority of those polled.

Most (58 percent) knew that the reform package will prohibit insurers from denying coverage to people because they are already sick; 55 percent knew that the law permits children to stay on their parents' insurance plan until age 26; and 52 percent realized that people who don't have insurance will be subject to financial penalties. Additionally, half of those polled were aware that employers with more than fifty employees will have to offer their workers affordable insurance. These are some of the major findings of the HealthDay/Harris Poll conducted between July 15 to 19, 2010, among 2,104 adults (aged eighteen and over).

Among other findings: 82 percent thought the bill will result in rationing of healthcare, or at least that it might; 79 percent didn't know if drug companies will pay an annual fee; 73 percent didn't know that the law establishes a new tax on the sale of medical devices; 66 percent weren't sure if the legislation will result in insurance exchanges where people can shop for insurance; and 63 percent didn't know if the new law will increase the number of people eligible for Medicaid.

"The problem for the (Obama) administration is that healthcare reform is fiendishly complicated because the healthcare system is fiendishly complicated, and it is not politically feasible to tear up the system and build it again," said Humphrey Taylor, chairman of the Harris Poll, Harris Interactive's long-running public opinion poll. "Instead, you have to build on the system that you have. When you try to build on a fiendishly complicated system, you have fiendishly complicated reforms."

Concern Stated Regarding Ghostwritten Medical Literature

On June 24, 2010, the office of United States Senator Charles Grassley released a report entitled "Ghostwriting in Medical Literature," highlighting his concern "about the lack of transparency that exists in medical ghostwriting." The report rightly calls for more uniform disclosure of financial and editorial support in medical publications and more specificity in acknowledging editorial assistance. However, one heading in the report states that "the role of pharmaceutical companies in medical publications remains veiled or undisclosed." As evidence, it references events that predate the global ethical standards that guide the development of medical publications today.

The International Society for Medical Publication Professionals (ISMPP) shares the senator's goal of improving transparency in this field. "ISMPP believes full disclosure and acknowledgment of all contributions to medical publications are essential elements of ethical publication practices that ultimately protect the health and safety of patients, and maintain the integrity of our profession," states Julia Ralston, CMPP, president, ISMPP.

ISMPP will continue to work with industry companies, the academic community, journal editors, and other professional societies to ensure global standardization and the highest levels of integrity in practices related to medical publications.

Visiting Nurse Service of NY Helps Meet Increasing Demand for New York City Home Care

Optimum Lightpath, a provider of Ethernet-based communication solutions for New York metropolitan area businesses, announced that Visiting Nurse Service of New York (VNSNY) has deployed its telecommunication services to deliver increased patient care capabilities, cut costs, and continued growth to meet increasing demand and opportunity. The roll out affects the nation's largest not-for-profit home health organization's more than 140,000 patients in New York City, 3,500 clinicians, and 3,000 office space staff. As a result, Visiting Nurse Service of New York has experienced an annual cost savings of more than \$150,000.

VNSNY staff and clinicians had been leaning heavily on the Internet to use Web-based applications, and for secure communication with other healthcare providers, from the office and out in the field. As Internet usage grew due to strong demand, there was a desire to expand access to more clinicians and staff. Further, VNSNY was eager to roll out a teleworker initiative and provide increased support for its 24/7 contact center.

To meet these emerging opportunities and needs, VNSNY relocated its data center and turned to Optimum Lightpath to double Internet bandwidth and improve circuits to support high-quality VoIP services, all at a lower annual cost.

WellPoint, American Well Collaborate to Bring Health Care Home

WellPoint, Inc., a large health benefits company, announced that it is collaborating with American Well to support and deploy American Well's Online Care platform, which will allow WellPoint to make Online Care services available to members of its affiliated health plans. Online Care enables individuals to access physicians and clinicians via video, secure chat, or phone.

"We recognize the need for healthcare to become more accessible and convenient than ever before, especially for individuals living in rural areas," said Dijuana Lewis, executive vice president and chief executive officer of WellPoint's Comprehensive Health Solutions business.

The Online Care service will allow members of WellPoint's affiliated health plans to engage in live encounters with primary care and specialty physicians, as well as with other clinicians. Members will be able to initiate these encounters from their home or workplace at any time, via the Web or telephone. During each live interaction, physicians will be able to review the member's available clinical information, speak with the member, prescribe medications as appropriate, and suggest follow-up care. The system will automatically create a complete record of each encounter, supporting continuity and collaboration among the providers caring for a member.

Parents Expect Kid's Doc to Be Board-Certified

Parents have high expectations of quality in their children's doctors and say they'd switch doctors if those expectations aren't met. Parents believe that staying current with board certification is necessary in showing that quality. Those are the findings of a new University of Michigan study published in the *Journal of Pediatrics*. The study aimed to characterize parents' attitudes about board certification and other factors that influence their choice of doctors, says Gary L. Freed, M.D., M.P.H., the study's lead author and director of the Child Health Evaluation and Research (CHEAR) Unit at the University of Michigan Health System. "New quality measures that are a part of the maintenance of certification process appear to strike a chord with parents," Freed says.

Parents expect their physicians to be board-certified and to maintain their certification over time. In fact, 77 percent of parents would likely change physicians if they knew he or she did not maintain their board certification. Researchers believe that as issues of patient safety and external measures of competency gain public interest, greater public pressure will likely be placed on hospitals, health plans, and individual physicians to be more transparent regarding board certification status.

An App That Saves Lives

International Anxiety Disorder elimination specialist, Charles Linden, announced that his Linden Method Program is now available as an app for the iPhone, iPad, and iPod Touch from the Apple App Store. This “first in genre” app cures anxiety disorder in all its forms. To date, The Linden Method (TLM) has helped over 135,000 people to recover. The Linden Method addresses all high anxiety disorders including panic, OCD, agoraphobia, and PTSD, and the curative success rate is above 96 percent among complying clients.

The app not only delivers The Linden Method Program in full but also offers extensive new products that have been developed to address high anxiety as it happens. It enables sufferers to move around more freely, empowering them to tackle moments of “anxiety crisis” in the moment. These moments of high anxiety would normally render them hopeless and scared, but with the TLM App, they have the cure in their pocket.

Apple's growing interest in medical applications for their technology reinforces the necessity for such high quality apps. The Linden Method-Cure Anxiety App is available on the iTunes platform. The maker claims that no other application that addresses anxiety conditions is available for the iPhone, iPad, or iPod Touch.

Elderly Most Likely to Use Ambulances

Patients with Medicare or Medicaid, the uninsured, the elderly, and the critically ill are the heaviest users of ambulances for transport to the emergency department, making them the most vulnerable during periods of ambulance diversion. The results of a study of more than 30,000 patients taken to emergency departments by ambulance were published online in *Annals of Emergency Medicine* (“At-Risk Populations and the Critically Ill Rely Disproportionately on Ambulance Transport to Emergency Departments”).

“The most surprising and somewhat disturbing finding in our study was that close to half of critically ill patients come to the ER on their own, without ambulance transport,” said lead study author Benjamin Squire, MD, of Harbor-UCLA Medical Center in Los Angeles. “It has shed a whole new light on how dangerously ill some of the patients in the waiting room are. When a patient comes to the emergency department by ambulance, he is being monitored continually, which is not the case for a patient coming in on his own. This finding changed my view of triage.”

Only 57 percent of critically ill patients went to the emergency department by ambulance. Among the critically ill, privately insured patients were less likely to rely on ambulance transport than those with Medicare, public insurance, or no insurance.