ORGANIZATION AND PRODUCTIVITY STRATEGIES FOR PRACTICING MEDICAL PHYSICISTS

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Objectives
- Describe the use of a personal workflow in managing ongoing or routine clinical physics duties.
- Select an appropriate method for filing various documents and records commonly encountered in medical physics.
- Implement strategies for minimizing the impact of interruptions on the physicist's daily work.

The Problem (“Stress”)
- Rapid input from numerous channels
  - email, smart phones, text and instant messaging, voice mail, pagers...
- Quickly changing priorities
- Multiple & varied responsibilities
- Multiple physical locations
- Interruptions
- Supervising others
The Problem ("Stuff")
How does this happen?

One Physicist’s Experience
- Managing 5+ junior physicists in training
- Developing new tools & methods
- Extensive travel
- Multi-week backlog of unfinished reports
- RSO duties on-call 24/7
- Many calls/emails unreturned until 3rd attempt

Think about YOUR stress
- Work / Life Balance?
- Piles of “guilty” stuff?
- Hundreds (or more) emails – every week?
- Keeping “want to do” projects moving?
- Keeping MANY projects and responsibilities moving?
- Staying current with subordinates?
- Should do something…not sure what, or how?
Your Action & Information Flow

Input / Data
- All incoming information, communications
- Email
- Voice (phone, voice mail)
- Paper (mail, fax)
- In-person / F2F
  - Chance meetings
  - Scheduled meetings
- Assistant
Meaning

- Commitment
- “What needs to happen with this?”
- “What is this FOR?”
- Not everything is actionable
- OK to be unclear
- Safe place for “Maybe Later”

Decision

- WHAT has to be done?
- WHO needs to do it?
- WHEN can it be done?
- WHEN must it be done?
- WHAT is needed to support this?
- WHAT is the very next action?

Priorities

- Urgency is defined externally
- Importance is defined by YOU
- To what are you committed?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Urgent</th>
<th>Not Urgent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crying baby</td>
<td>Exercise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitchen fire</td>
<td>Distractions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important</td>
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<td>Important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Important</td>
<td>Important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trivia</td>
<td>Time wasters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ACTION!

ACTION THIS DAY

Multi-Tasking

[Image of a panda]

[Blank space]
Review
• Is this complete?
  • Yes – nothing else to do – file it!
  • No – what needs to happen next?
• If there is more to be done, treat that information as INPUT
  • Prepare for new input

Reviewing
• Review completed work in real-time
• Schedule regular time to review everything in your system
• Balance time and effort across areas
• Remind yourself about Important-Not-Urgent priorities

FILING SYSTEMS:
ORGANIZING RESOURCES
Filing challenges

• Out of sight, out of mind?
• What is this FOR?
• WHEN will I need this again?
• Storage/retrieval time
• Shared vs. personal files?
• Systems for paper, electronic filing?
  • Special considerations for email?
• Regulatory retention requirements?

Filing System Design

- Flat
- Hierarchical
- Simple A-Z Index
- Complex Functional Index
- Fast/Easy Storage
- Fast/Easy Retrieval
- Single User
- Shared

Personal Files

• Simple A-Z index
• File by keyword (trust your instinct)
• Miscellaneous reference
  • “Might need this later”
• Working projects “Support materials”
  • Raw data for research
  • Notebooks with QC data for reports
  • List of applicants for job opening
Personal Files

Shared Files

I use:
Email Filing
- Hard to keep emails with other digital files (technical limitations)
- Two approaches:
  - Use parallel folder system inside mail client
  - Use a “pile file”

Pile Filing
- With good search tool, NO index needed
- To file: throw it on the “pile”
  - May help to add your own keywords first
- To retrieve: use search function

INTERRUPTIONS
The Bane of Productivity? Or Opportunity Knocks?
NO Multi-Tasking Allowed

- “Pause” the interruption
- “Bookmark” (10-15 seconds)
- Collect the interruption input
- Assess importance: “Will something bad happen if I don’t deal with this right now?”
- Decide:
  - Switch to dealing with interruption
  - Defer the interruption to another time

PULLING IT ALL TOGETHER

Crew Personal Resource Management

- Actually attention management
- Put away piles without fear, guilt
- “Urgent” can’t overshadow “Important”
- Minimize impact of interruptions
You will have:

- Clean desk & office
- Progress on what you WANT done
- Freedom to focus

Review

- Describe the use of a personal workflow in managing ongoing or routine clinical physics duties.
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QUESTIONS?

Thank you!