


Medical Managers, Mark Your Calendars! Plan for Important Health Care Dates in 2013 Now!

With the first full workweek of the new year upon us, it's a great time to take a look ahead at some of the big dates in 2013. For medical managers, this is the perfect time to look at key dates for the year. If you have a favorite wall or desk calendar (or just received one as a gift over the holidays) you can take note of the federal/bank holidays, and determine how they will affect your schedule, then add any of the healthcare-specific observances. Let's look at the 2013  government holidays first.

Federal Holidays

There are no surprises here of course, with ten familiar dates that your office may or may not observe. Your office may not observe it, but schools and daycares might – which may impact your schedule. The beginning of the year is also a great time to review your policy on opening and closing these days, as well as reminding your staff about policies to request time off and calling in sick.

via United States Office of Personnel Management

- **New Year's Day** – Tuesday, January 1st, 2013
- **Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday** – Monday, January 21st, 2013 (**Inauguration Day** also falls on January 21st in 2013)
- **George Washington's Birthday** – Monday, February 18th, 2013

- **Memorial Day** – *Monday, May 27th, 2013*
- **Independence Day** – *Thursday, July 4th, 2013*
- **Labor Day** – *Monday, September 2nd, 2013*
- **Columbus Day** – *Monday, October 14th, 2013*
- **Veterans Day** – *Monday, November 11th, 2013*
- **Thanksgiving Day** – *Thursday, November 28th, 2013*
- **Christmas Day** – *Wednesday, December 25th, 2013*

Healthcare Observances

Now let's talk about healthcare observances. Every year, governmental and non-profit organizations as well as private companies observe days, weeks, and months to raise awareness for various medical causes and concerns, to remind people to communicate with their healthcare providers and ask about preventative care, and to promote public health. These organizations are pouring time, energy and resources into these observances, and they are often looking for ways to reach out to providers with everything from educational and marketing materials to representatives to come to events and fundraisers on their behalf. As a manager this gives you a lot of different opportunities to educate your current patients as well as reaching out to the community at large in a meaningful way. Reminders about health observances also make great ideas for your practice website or blog, or for patient newsletters or emails. Even providing these dates compiled as a list to your patients can be useful as they have causes they wish to support as well.

We found a fantastic list of health observances from the National Wellness Institute, that also has links to more information about each observance. There are also a ton of great outreach materials from 2012 Health Observances at the Healthfinder.gov Website. The 2013 Health Observances has not yet been published, but should be available soon.

Religious Holidays

As the US becomes more multi-cultural, employers will have employees with different religious observances. Although you may not ask any applicants about religious beliefs before they have been offered and accepted a position, it is fine to ask the newly hired employee if there are any dates they plan to take off due to religious holidays. This can be especially important for provider schedules, as many physicians are coming to your practice from around the world, and communication about expectations at the beginning of employment can avoid a disaster down the road.

Here is a **good reference** for religious holidays.

Meaningful Use

Whether you plan to achieve Meaningful Use for the first time in 2013, or you have already received your Meaningful Use Stage 1 payment from CMS, there is a great list of upcoming important MU dates on the HealthSecurity Solutions Blog. If you're just starting, they make a great outline for a time frame for your group, and if you already have some MU achieved, they make a great reminder.

Birthdays & Anniversaries

Whether you celebrate each staff birthday individually, or the topic never comes up in your office, the beginning of the year is a great time to update birthdays, as well as all other employee demographic information. If you have a birthday list, make sure all of your new hires are there, and don't forget the providers – they love to be remembered. Anniversaries are largely overlooked in the workplace, unless there is an annual evaluation due at anniversary time. If you can, a short handwritten note sent to the employee's home thanking them for their years of service is a wonderful low-cost employee

appreciation strategy.

Staff Recognition Days

There are all kinds of staff recognition days, weeks and months – enough to make your head spin. I decided a long time ago that I was bound to miss someone's special staff recognition day and hurt someone's feelings, so instead of celebrating everything separately, I created "Staff Appreciation Week" to celebrate everyone. Staff Appreciation Week in the past has culminated with me cooking for the staff (one year my husband made 14 homemade pizzas for the lucky office!) which people seem to really appreciate. It doesn't have to be just you cooking – it could be the physicians, the supervisors or team leaders. The personal effort is very meaningful to staff.

So what did we miss? What other important dates are you marking on your calendars for 2013? Let us know in the comments!