This tool accompanies *Lessons for Financial Success* available at mgma.com/lessons.
Lessons is a free, easy-to-use guide for office administrators and physicians who manage their own practices but may not have a formal business background.

Tips for Collecting at the Time of Service

1. Always begin by asking for the balance in full, e.g. "The charge is 'X' dollars. Would you like to pay by cash, check or credit card?"

2. Develop a sense of urgency with the patient concerning the need for full payment at the time of service.

3. Politely explain that the medical group does not carry accounts without specific prior arrangements.

4. When establishing a new patient in the practice, get the name and full contact information of the financially responsible party prior to providing a major surgery, medical or ancillary procedure.

5. Obtain, with proper signatures, all credit information.

6. If the patient cannot pay at the time of service, obtain the date on which the account will be paid in full. Try not to go beyond 30 days.

7. Instruct patients on how to use the e-commerce system of online payment.

8. Consider isolating a call center, separate from the front desk staff, to handle appointments. This way, the front desk staff is able to focus on collections and can offer more personal, high-quality customer service.

Source: Pavlock, Ernest J. Financial Management for Medical Groups. New York: Medical Group Management Association/Center f, 1994.