

not need to be deployed," Costis says. "We only get paid if they bring patients back here so this was an opportunity to save on

costs." The idea is if there is a call to 9-1-1 that is not considered an emergency where an ambulance is required, then

the call can get transferred right to the triage nurse, she adds. ■

Reconfirming the Need for the Scheduling Call Center in an Online World

BEVERLY HILLS, CA—Yuriy Kotlyar, CEO of the outsource call center company American Health Connection says that he is starting to see a misconception take hold among some that the need for the scheduling call center function is declining as various online self-scheduling tools take effect. On the surface it might seem that the move toward using tools such as ZocDoc would mean decreased phone calls into the call center. That might be true on the front end, but still there often needs to be precertification and insurance verification done for these appointments and that's where the call center still has an important role, he says. His company does work with some healthcare organizations that have a relationship with one of these online self-scheduling companies and this is what his folks are experiencing.

Additionally, says Joe Alfonsi, Director, Temple Access Center in Philadelphia, "People may have questions. For example, they may want to know what bus to take to get to the appointment." He views the scheduling call center

as the entrée to the organization, the place that starts the relationship with the patient. And, as such, that human interaction is much valued, he adds.

Then there's the role of the scheduling call center in making ancillary test appointments. Kotlyar maintains that online scheduling tools are not really oriented to do this. Rather, the ancillary scheduling call center is the appropriate venue for vetting the patient request as sometimes there are errors in

orders that need to have a back and forth conversation with the medical office (and sometimes the physician) to make sure that the patient is getting the right test in the right time frame.

Kotlyar has framed his thoughts around what he sees currently happening today as opposed to what might happen in the future. For thoughts on what could potentially be on the horizon see our September 2015 story "Accenture Report Predicts Dramatic Increase in Self-Scheduling." ■

