

Strategies to grow your practice

Work smarter, not harder, to connect with your patients.

BY ROB BERMAN

CHANGES IN THE HEALTHCARE SYSTEM, INCLUDING ELECTRONIC health records, value-based reimbursement, onerous reporting to third-party payers, and shrinking payments for your services, require you to more aggressively market your practice. And there are new ways for you to engage and retain your current patients without working harder. Are you taking full advantage of these trends?

Widening demographic

More people than ever are using chiropractic care, according to the *2015 Gallup-Palmer Inaugural Report: Americans' Perceptions of Chiropractic*. Almost half the adults in the U.S. have been to a chiropractor as a patient, and almost 15 percent of adults have seen a chiropractor within the last 12 months. Additionally, within the past five years, 12 percent of U.S. adults have seen a chiro-

practor, and 25 percent say they saw a chiropractor more than five years ago. Not only does this data suggest that more adults are seeking chiropractic care but that nearly half of all adults will see a chiropractor at least once.

Despite chiropractic's success at reaching a larger audience, there still remains a population that needs to engage or re-engage with chiropractic. You are in a unique position as a business owner to directly influence your practice revenue by the efforts you put into your marketing. Without a sustained and conscious effort to grow your patient base, your practice will begin to slow down, level off, or begin a downward spiral.

What about the competition?

Don't be afraid to be different when it comes to marketing your practice on social media. Virtually all your marketing efforts should be focused on the key issues and concerns of

your potential patients: What is keeping them up at night? What would they like to get most out of chiropractic care? Use this information to create a simple message that can be used across media and in multiple ways.

Consider some different ways to communicate with patients both online and in person. These can help you better evaluate your current efforts in each of these areas. Remember, do not double down on a tactic or strategy that is not working; instead, try something new.

Referrals from patients and doctors

Referrals are an easy way to evaluate the health of your practice. If patients are getting better and enjoy interacting with your staff, they'll recommend you to their family and friends. But no practice



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can thrive by counting on referrals from happy patients alone. Develop a referral system and use it. Remember, referrals are a two-way street: give them and ask for them.

Create a list of physicians and providers who are likely to refer patients to your practice and network with them. You will quickly gain more referrals in addition to expanding your number of referring sources. Always thank the providers with a fruit basket or snacks.

Engage with patients

You can significantly increase the responsiveness to your marketing message by making a high value, low stress offer. Develop an ongoing educational and automated conversation with your patients. Share blog posts, newsletters, or helpful articles. Think about what your patients would benefit from the most and highlight those articles. It can be anything from services and procedures that have been proven to get results, and which your office also offers. Patients—or potential patients—respond to a high-perceived-value offer.

Send postcards to your patients to fill them in on the latest in your practice, or to remind them how thankful you are to have them as a patient. Because most mail is white, off-white, or beige, postcards let you stand out with bright colors and attention-getting graphics. A quality mailing list is essential for this task. Look in your EHR system for addresses of current and lapsed patients or purchase a mailing list from a reputable company.

Speak and write

You can reach those who may know little or nothing about chiropractic by speaking at various clubs. For instance, Rotary and Kiwanis clubs, chambers of commerce, health clubs, and sports clubs are constantly in need of expert speakers. If you have a

sports and rehabilitation-based clinic, then sports teams and sports clubs are a natural. If you are amenable, offer free initial exams or X-rays or other services to bring them to your office. Have a staff member record your talk, divide the content into snippets, and use those clips on your website in addition to posting them to YouTube. Always be looking for creative ways to reuse and repurpose your content.

You can also hold short seminars in your office or an outside location on topics of interest to patients and potential patients. Your office will do all the marketing since you won't have a sponsor like a chamber of commerce. Share your knowledge and love for chiropractic, give the attendees a special gift or offer, and make the experience valuable. Help your potential patients see the value in chiropractic, and you will increase your practice revenue.

Local newspapers and websites, regional magazines and various newsletters seek content to fill their pages. You are well educated and knowledgeable. Don't be afraid to share this knowledge with current and potential patients so that they can view you as an expert, and "go-to" person, for their condition or situation. Once you are published, share the information on your website and via social media. Have it framed in your waiting and treatment area.

You can also send out press releases regarding important events in your practice. The local media may publish your press release, write a short story quoting your press release or contact you for an interview. 



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