

CHAPTER 3

THE ANATOMY OF AN EFFECTIVE PRACTICE WEBSITE

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We're way past simply advising that every medical practice needs a website. Today, the challenge facing health care professionals is putting up a website that actually contributes the bottom line. Most practices are still held back with a basic brochure site that features only scant educational information. This is no longer enough; not if you want your medical practice to be relevant online, let alone successfully bring in patients through the internet.

A survey conducted by the health information network Surescripts found that patients are more likely to select a digitally proficient doctor if given a choice, and far less likely to leave one. Your website is a crucial component in demonstrating your practice's digital sophistication. It should not only reflect your professional success, but should also clearly articulate your mission and present real-life stories about how your work has positively impacted patients. Remember: your website is not a trophy room, nor is it meant for your peers; it's for your patients. With that in mind, since patients are increasingly searching for and comparing physicians online, your website should be a hub for all of your practice marketing efforts.

When it comes to building and maintaining a practice website patients want to visit and use, it helps to first understand what they're looking for. Patients want a modern and informative website, containing:

- Practice location(s) and hours of operation
- Contact information
- Treatment information
- Doctor and staff credentials
- Ability to schedule an appointment
- Patient reviews
- Insurances accepted

If these strike you as basic requests, you're correct; this information

can easily be communicated through a simple, yet comprehensive, website. Unfortunately, many practices fail to do even this, displaying incomplete or inaccurate information that does little to help patients. Ensuring you have this basic information listed will enable the beginning of a positive patient experience, and start to set you apart from your competition.

ATTRACTING NEW PATIENTS TO YOUR PRACTICE

Driving organic traffic to your website is crucial to bringing in new patients. That means your website needs a strong search engine optimization (SEO) strategy, one that is geared toward ranking highly in local search results. This is accomplished by targeting the right keywords for your specialty, those that answer the specific questions local patients are asking about the conditions you treat and the treatments you offer at your practice. It also requires putting up content that attracts backlinks, the key driver of high search engine rankings. Both SEO and content marketing will be discussed in greater depth in the following chapters.

When visitors arrive, your website needs to give them an immediate reason to stay and look around instead of bouncing away. Your homepage needs to communicate clearly who and what you treat, so that potential patients know that they're in the right place. It should feature your practice's unique selling proposition as well as your credentials, and should offer patients the ability to schedule an appointment. Photos of your office and your staff should be used heavily throughout the website to get patients accustomed to seeing your practice; you want to be a familiar face before they even step through your doors.

You also need to provide clear, easy navigation to the information patients are most interested in finding: what services and treatments you provide, what insurances you accept, your theory of care, and basic contact information. While you don't want to cram all of this material onto your homepage, you should strive to make it readily apparent where on your site the information can be found.

Lastly, provide patient reviews, stories, and recommendations that act as social proof of your expertise. Patient and colleague testimonials

THE ANATOMY OF AN EFFECTIVE PRACTICE WEBSITE

regarding the care you've provided them are valuable, as are any media quotes or references you may have acquired. Social proof is the new word-of-mouth, so make sure all your website visitors see the great things other people say about you.



POSITIONING YOUR PRACTICE AS AN AUTHORITY

Not everyone coming to your website is ready to be a patient. They may be researching a specific medical issue, with which they or a loved one are dealing, or they may just be curious about a more general medical condition. In either case, they're looking for authoritative information.

Your website needs to contain the content that answers their questions. You can do this through blog posts, a "Patient Resources" section, or even downloadable content; in other words, anything that allows you to share important information, current news, and your latest advances with your patients.

Good content to post on your website's blog can include articles like "How to Prepare for Ankle Surgery" or "What Your Doctor Needs to Know That Most Patients Don't Share." You can also use this section to offer ongoing patient education, commentary on medical trends, and even new patient promotions.

Posting this sort of material serves multiple purposes. Firstly, valuable content keeps patients glued to your site and coming back for more information. Secondly, it builds a positive relationship with new patients, establishing your authority and credibility. Finally, it attracts those backlinks we talked about earlier. As more websites link back to your page, Google assigns more authority to your site, and therefore ranks it higher in search results.

Other types of content that build your practice's authority with prospective patients (and Google) include links to press clippings, personable, information-rich physician and staff bios, and individual pages dedicated to each condition you treat and treatment you provide. All of these pages should have titles, headings, content, and descriptions optimized based on keyword research (see Chapter 4 for more information on keyword research).

ESTABLISHING AND STRENGTHENING YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH PATIENTS

The authority you can establish as an informative, engaging resource is an important part of forming the relationship you want between your practice and prospective patients. While most of the content you create informs these patients, you also need to develop obvious channels that encourage your website visitors to come see you.

You want to insert calls-to-action (CTAs) throughout your site and blog that provide ways for patients to connect with you, whether they want to schedule an appointment, sign up for your newsletter, or simply contact your office with a concern. One CTA that will open an ongoing channel of communication between your practice and your patients is the inclusion of links to your social media profiles on your website, thereby encouraging

THE ANATOMY OF AN EFFECTIVE PRACTICE WEBSITE

visitors to follow your practice on Facebook or Instagram. Another call-to-action can involve the promotion of links to specific content within your website, such as staff biographies or particularly popular blog posts.

Building an email list, one that includes current and potential future patients, is another important step in strengthening relationships with patrons of your practice. This is where gated content can play an important role. Gated content refers to high value material that is only made available to people willing to share their email address with you. Gated content can take the form of a newsletter or a special eBook on a particular condition or treatment.

REDUCING ADMINISTRATIVE FRICTION BETWEEN YOUR PRACTICE AND YOUR PATIENTS

Make your website easy to use. Don't make visitors work to find what they need. Start with navigation that's intuitive and obvious. Place click-to-call and online scheduling links on every page so patients who are ready to get in touch with you can do so right away. The practice name, address, and phone number should be located in the footer of every webpage; the practice phone number should be listed in the top right corner as well, so patients can find it easily.

Your site must also be optimized for mobile devices. With the usage





of smartphones and tablets soaring (mobile searches started outpacing desktop searches a couple years ago), it is imperative that your website work just as flawlessly on a smartphone or tablet as it does on a computer. A mobile-optimized practice website carries all the attraction, ease, and authority of your desktop website.

Finally, your website should capture patient demand and demographic information and provide metrics for future campaign optimization via an online analytics program. Remember, if you're anticipating having thousands of patients visit your website every year, you should procure as much data from them as possible. By tracking activity on your practice website, you can use the information gathered to make objective decisions about content and advertising that will grow your practice. These are often overlooked aspects of a practice website, and will be explored in greater depth in Chapter 11.

THE ANATOMY OF AN EFFECTIVE MEDICAL PRACTICE WEBSITE CHECKLIST:

- The current website design is clean and modern.
- The website is easy to use and information is easy to find.
- The practice name, address, and phone number are found on every page, including a phone number in the top right corner.
- There is the ability to schedule an appointment online.
- There is a contact page with full practice contact details.
- There is a page for every condition treated.
- There is a page for every procedure or treatment you perform.
- There is a page for each of the main practitioners.
- Photos of the practice, reception area, examination rooms, equipment used, etc. are found throughout the website.
- Reviews and other patient and professional testimonials are prominently featured.
- There is a blog with current articles and information related to your practice, the conditions you treat, and the treatments you offer.
- New content is posted frequently to support monthly marketing campaigns.
- There is an easily visible way to subscribe to the practice's email newsletter.
- Each of the website's pages is optimized based on industry keyword research.
- The website looks and functions the same, or extremely similarly, on all devices.
- The website looks and functions the same on all popular web browsers.
- An online analytics program is set up to track the activity of visitors to your website.