Transform Yourself Into a New-Patient Magnet

By Michelle Geller-Vino, CA

Every chiropractic office wants more patients. In fact, the biggest challenge many practices face is how to get new patients and what sources to use. Yellow Pages and newspaper ads, telemarketing, television commercials, chamber and networking events - do they really work and bring in your ideal patient? Besides internal referrals, many doctors expect their chiropractic assistants to bring in the new patients. Between greeting, scheduling and checking patients out, recalls, verifying insurance, answering questions, tending to phone calls, and meeting the needs of your doctor, do you think there is enough time in the day to worry about finding new patients?

The truth is that the best way to acquire new patients is by building relationships within the community. The best way to do that is by encouraging your doctor to go outside the office and meet people, thus creating new relationships. Are you a people person? Do you love stepping out of your comfort zone? Do you own the chiropractic philosophy? Is there a chance you might be the right CA to help build the practice of your doctor’s dreams? If so, discuss the following action steps with your doctor to turn his or her practice into a marketing machine!

Step One: Find the right person. Figure out if you are the right person for this role. (If you aren’t, help your doctor find the right dynamic, energized and enthusiastic individual to become the marketing/public relations coordinator). You must have at least six to eight hours a week available to dedicate solely to the marketing of the practice. If you need to look outside the practice, here are some methods of finding the right person for the job:

- Visit your local mall or restaurant and seek out happy, outgoing and well-spoken individuals. Get involved in a conversation with this person to determine where they are in their career and personal life, and see if they are suited to and have an interest in becoming the marketing person you are looking for.
- Recruit an existing patient who is passionate about chiropractic and your doctor. This may be a mother whose kids are in school and who can work a couple of mornings a week.
Keep your eyes and ears open when you’re out and about; you’ll be sure to find a perfect candidate for this position!

**Step Two: Discuss your ideal patient with your doctor.** The most successful practices are well-rounded and have a variety of patient types (children, seniors, wellness patients, athletes, personal-injury patients). However, research has shown that if a practice consists of a patient base with the ideal patients, the practice will not only be more successful, but it also will allow the doctor and team to have more fun and less stress! Although we want to target market our ideal patients, no one is ever turned away and all patients are served equally and with excellent care.

**Step Three: Find your ideal patient.** Now that you have determined who your ideal patients are, let’s discuss where they can be found. The best way to illustrate this is to discuss a few examples and strategies.

- If your ideal patients are children, you may want to consider marketing to parenting groups or midwives, and not focus on marketing to senior centers or nursing facilities. Most parenting groups are looking for guest speakers to speak on topics pertaining to their children’s health. Why not offer to have your doctor speak on a topic such as "Raising Healthy Children" in order to educate mothers who are usually the health care decision-makers of the family?

- If your ideal patients are teachers, you may want to consider marketing to the schools in your community. Most schools have staff development days, when they invite outside speakers to present workshops to their teachers and support staff. Since most teachers can benefit from learning how to reduce stress in their lives, offering a stress management workshop to the principals of each school is something they would consider a benefit.

**Step Four: Help your doctor gain exposure in your community.** As you’ve read in the examples above, the best way to help your doctor increase his or her visibility in the community is to arrange lectures on health wellness and safety topics at various schools, businesses and organizations. By providing valuable information to people in your community, your doctor will become well-known and build a positive reputation. Time management is the key to a successful marketing program! By helping your doctor find balance inside and outside the practice, not only will it be easier to organize a marketing plan, but you also will see better results. Make sure your doctor is available at least a half day per week and can be flexible, so he or she can cater to the community. For example, many schools plan their calendars a year in advance; therefore, they will most likely not be flexible with times. If a school wants your doctor to present a stress
management workshop to the teachers and support staff on a Monday at 3:15 p.m., make sure your doctor is able to cluster his or her patients around this workshop time and make the workshop a top priority.

**Step Five: Realize the sky is the limit!** Since there are no boundaries in the world of marketing, there are many different and fun opportunities to take advantage of. If you can add to the growth of the practice, perhaps you could arrange an incentive program with your doctor. A bonus system is a great way to keep you motivated and excited to set up events for your practice. It’s a win-win situation! Marketing doesn’t end with setting up lectures and screenings. It opens up doors to a whole new approach in getting new patients.

As you can see, attracting new patients into your office can be simple and easy. All it takes is approximately six to eight hours a week of spending time on the telephone, contacting places that consist of your ideal patients, and setting up marketing events to attract a stream of new patients into your office. From internal marketing events such as themed patient appreciation dinners to spinal screenings at various health and wellness events, having fun and being creative will be the key to building a practice and turning yourself into a new-patient magnet!

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