



The Future of Medical Marketing

It's important to keep up with changing technology.

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The marketing and promotion strategies of the past are not going to be adequate to promote practices in 2022 and beyond. The Internet is leveling the playing field of medical knowledge. Several decades ago, the doctor was the holder of all medical knowledge, and patients came to physicians for advice and knowledge. Today, a motivated patient with a computer and Internet access can learn as much about the pathophysiology and treatment of heart disease or any other condition as a physician. Physicians, once viewed as the royal dispensers of specialized knowledge, now see patients who have researched their medical condition and arrive with a file full of studies and a course of action from credible websites.

Because it is possible that physicians no longer have more information than patients, it is our caring and compassion that will be important in helping patients follow our advice, be compliant in their follow-up, and improve their medical outcomes. Our new mantra should be “Computers (algorithms) will not replace us!”

Physicians may find the trends discussed in the following sections useful for marketing and promoting their medical practice, today and into the future.

Telemedicine

Perhaps the biggest game-changer for medical practices since COVID-19 became part of the picture is telemedicine. The use of telemedicine has increased significantly since March 2020, when CMS waived requirements that limited telemedicine to distant site communication be-

Video Marketing

Video marketing has been gaining a lot of attention on social media, especially in relation to healthcare practices. Video marketing is a healthcare marketing trend that is generating the highest level of engagement. Many prefer watching videos rather than reading about medical conditions. When done

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tween patients and physicians and now includes all patients who have Medicare and Medicaid. Furthermore, CMS agreed to compensate physicians for virtual visits at the same rate as in-person visits.

Physicians now are able to provide safe and effective care without the necessity of examining the patient in person. For example, we estimate that nearly 60% of patients in primary care can be managed using telemedicine. Many patients, especially Millennials, will be looking for healthcare providers who offer virtual visits using telemedicine. Practices that do not offer to communicate with patients by way of telemedicine probably will lose patients.

well, videos can help attract and hold the attention of viewers and improve your reach to attract new patients.

Short, content-rich videos of less than five minutes are the most effective. You can offer videos that focus on the topics that differentiate you and your practice from others in the area. Another effective type of video for healthcare marketing is testimonials from existing patients and from your staff, which helps build trust and credibility with current and potential patients.

Since the arrival of COVID-19, the medical marketing playing field has changed forever. We will no longer practice or care for patients as we have done in the past. Those doctors

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and practices that can accept change and can adjust will be the ones who will still have enjoyment, success, and balance in their work, all of which provide a defense against burnout.

Psychographic Marketing

Demographic information, such as age, gender, race, address, and occupation can be the starting point for targeting new patients, but it doesn't identify potential patients' attitudes and mindsets.

Demographics explain "who" your patient is; psychographics explain "why." Psychographic information includes your potential patients' habits, hobbies, health-related experiences, and values—information you need to promote your services to a particular segment of the population. To reach ideal patients, you must know what and who they value most, where they look for their medical information, and what content appeals to them. With that information, you can create specific messages about your areas of interest or expertise and can make your practice attractive to new patients.

Cybersecurity

Cybersecurity is another consideration in the digital marketing of the healthcare practice. Healthcare faces greater cyber risks than other sectors because of inherent weaknesses in its security posture. Many providers think that they can defend themselves from cyberattacks, but that is folly.

The healthcare sector is an attractive target for cyberattacks for two simple reasons: it is a rich source of valuable data; and it is a soft target. Cybersecurity is not just about protecting data; it is fundamental to maintaining the safety, privacy, and trust of our patients. Effective cybersecurity must become an integral part of every medical practice.¹

Shifting Gears from Illness to Wellness

Nearly 18% of the U.S. gross domestic product is spent on healthcare—estimated at \$3 trillion per year. Some suggest that one-third of that amount, or \$1 trillion, is wasted with duplicated tests, services, and the cost of defensive medicine. Unfortunately, a huge gap exists between spending and outcomes. In fact, Americans lag near the bottom among wealthy countries when it comes to health outcomes.²

One problem is that today's healthcare system focuses almost exclusively on responding to symptoms and illnesses or after the patient becomes sick or injured. In the United States, we spend 97% of our healthcare resources on disease care.³

But another vision for healthcare is emerging—one that is focused on wellness rather than illness—that is, proactive instead of reactive; and that focuses on population health rather than managing just a single patient with a single illness or constellation of illnesses.

Within the past decade, big data,

Alexa, Amazon's virtual assistant, is primed to perform healthcare-related tasks. "She" can track blood glucose levels, describe symptoms, access post-surgical care instructions, monitor home prescription deliveries, and make same-day appointments at the nearest urgent care center. Alexa can look at a picture of a wound and give advice if additional care is needed.

Alexa also can assist with your insurance claims. Liberty Mutual Insurance launched the first-of-its-kind Alexa service that allows insurance buyers to navigate the policy pur-

**Never forget that your most precious asset
is your reputation.**

analytics, and social networks, as well as advances in technologies such as wearable health-tracking devices, have given us the ability to learn more about wellness. That is the premise behind scientific wellness, which starts with a systems approach to analyzing highly specialized large datasets of individual human biomarkers such as genes, proteins, and microbiomes, and combines the results with personalized health coaching to influence the health of our population.

Just as the Hubble Telescope provided a new view into the universe, personal, dense, dynamic data sets will be transformational for providing new insights into both human biology and disease. This approach can help us better understand the genetic and environmental factors that determine our health status. Over time, this will enable us to identify the earliest transitions from wellness to disease, which is the key to both predictive and preventive care for individuals.

Precision Medicine and Precision Marketing

With an emphasis on personalized medicine, patients expect to be cared for to meet their individual needs. In addition to personalizing medicine, consider personalizing marketing to ensure that the right patients are receiving the right messages. The same theory of precision medicine can be applied to the practice's healthcare marketing efforts.

"Dr. Alexa" will see you now.

chase and management process purely by using their Amazon Echos.⁴

A new Alexa skill will help furnish patients with all the detailed information about the hospital they need before they leave from their home. This will enable users to gain access to real-time information about the hospital, including:

- Parking information;
- Visitor information;
- Important contact information;
- Bill payment information;
- Directions to the hospital and the closest urgent care facility;
- Info on how to view medical records; and
- Important things that you need to bring for your hospital stay.

Online Reputation Management

Physicians live and die by their reputations. We spend our entire medical careers polishing and protecting this status. The Internet has dramatically altered the way people gather information. It is sad but true that a single comment that takes only a few seconds for a patient to create and a single mouse-click to post on the Internet can be seen by thousands of visitors and ruin the reputation a physician has spent a lifetime building.

Never forget that your most precious asset is your reputation. Online physician reviews are positive 70% to 90% of the time.⁵ However, physicians need to know the process of managing negative

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reviews. The best advice is to make sure you have many more positive reviews than negative reviews. That way an occasional negative review will not significantly detract from your online reputation.

Show Me the Money

A reasonable investment to make in marketing is 3% to 5% of the practice's gross revenues. However, marketers must be able to show that the money invested demonstrates a return on the practice's investment. It is reasonable to ask a marketing firm about the expected increment in new patients or how the marketing firm plans to position the practice on the first page of Google.

Bottom Line

If you plan to be in practice for the foreseeable future, you will need to embrace a few of these suggestions and implement them into your practice. Most of them are easily accomplished with

minimal expense, have been tested in other practices, and have been demonstrated to be effective. The toothpaste is out of the tube and can't be put back. That metaphor applies to medical marketing and practice promotion. It will not be enough to be a good diagnostician and provide excellent treatment for the medical conditions you treat. Patients are expecting a different level of care, and they expect the same convenience they receive from airlines, hotels, Amazon, the stockbroker, accountant, and the dentist. Doctors who embrace this change in the attitude of their post-pandemic patients are going to be the ones who succeed today and tomorrow. **PM**

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