

BUILDING A STRONG ONLINE REPUTATION FOR YOUR DERMATOLOGY PRACTICE

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The inherently free nature of the Internet allows people to access valuable information in almost any area of their interest. Plenty of useful dermatology related information is also available through websites of practicing dermatologists and institutions. However, the very nature of the Internet also gives rise to the risk of misinformation and negative biases in some situations.

A number of review, ranking, and rating websites have come up in recent years that are aimed at empowering the consumers about various products, services and organizations, including medical practices. Through these websites, a dermatologist has an opportunity to receive positive word of mouth for their practice. At the same time, the risk of unfair or misplaced reviews, comments or opinions about the practice also exists. For an upcoming dermatology practice, it can be a challenge to manage its professional online reputation in such a scenario.

ONLINE MEDICAL REVIEWS

Review websites about doctors may be categorized into no-fee sites that provide free information to the patients about listed doctors, and paid sites that provide privileged information to patients for a fee. The free websites may earn their revenue by charging the listed doctors, or by way of advertising. The dermatologist should keep a tab on competitor activity on such sites because it may deliver controlled information through a relationship between the doctor and the website.

Many online discussion forums provide an opportunity to patients to share their experiences or express their opinions and comments about a particular dermatologist. Negative or biased opinions on such platforms can cause a dent to the online reputation of the doctor over a period of time. It is important to counter such reviews with other positive reviews, or provide a fair explanation and resolution of the issues mentioned in the reviews.

PROACTIVE SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

Social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, Google+ and others have emerged as a powerful collective force to influence the online reputation of a dermatology practice in a variety of ways. Proactive engagement over social media is the right strategy to build an effective online reputation. The dermatologist can create one or more social media accounts, and get involved actively by reaching out to new, existing and potential patients.

Listening to the concerns, issues and doubts of the patients will help the dermatologist gain insights into how a patient thinks, and how he or she perceives their practice. Disseminating useful information, advice and guidance through social media can have a positive impact on the dermatologist's online reputation over time. Interacting with individuals on social media consolidates the image of an accessible, friendly and caring doctor.

HIRING REPUTATION MANAGEMENT PROFESSIONALS

A dermatologist who is looking to grow and expand the scope of their practice in a particular area can effectively capitalize on the power and reach of the Internet by building a strong online reputation. The most practical way to achieve this goal may be to hire the services of a professional reputation management company with proven credentials and experience in handling accounts of dermatologists.

The task of online reputation management will essentially begin from the reinforcing the existing website of the dermatology practice, or creating a new dynamic website from scratch. The professional reputation management expert will be able to create the right kind of online buzz about the website, and achieve positive comments and reviews and good online visibility for the dermatologist. Thirdly, the expert will perform a proactive role in building and protecting the dermatologist's reputation on third party websites.

The marketing goals of the dermatology practice must be achieved, while maintaining the highest ethical and professional standards. The information disseminated through the dermatology website and other online channels should be accurate, relevant and original. A reputation management firm with sufficient experience and a demonstrable track record in handling online promotion and marketing for dermatology practices will be able to help the dermatologist achieve the desired goals. ■



Naren Arulrajah is President and CEO of Ekwa Marketing, a complete Internet marketing company which focuses on SEO, social media, marketing education and the online reputations of dermatologists. With a team of 130+ full time marketers, Ekwa.com helps one doctor in an area dominate their market and grow their business significantly year after year. If you have questions about marketing your practice online, call Naren direct at 877-249-9666.