

SEO Tips for Holistic Dental Practices

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In dentistry, there are no one-size-fits-all solutions. Every patient is different, and there are always exceptions. What is good for most people still is not good for everyone. The same is true of websites, and marketing plans in general. What works well for an e-tailer is not likely to work for a dentist. Furthermore, holistic practices face unique SEO (search engine optimization) challenges.

What Google Wants

Google strives to deliver quality information and accurate answers for any query. Standards are especially high for financial or medical websites, a category known as YMYL (your money or your life). For this type of websites, it is paramount to establish E-A-T (expertise, authority, and trustworthiness).

High quality, in depth, accurate information is key. Unfortunately, Google's view on quality and accuracy may vary from your own. In fact, updates over the past few years have had such a dramatic impact on holistic, integrative, and other "alternative" medical websites that many people are accusing the search giant of suppressing information.

The Challenge for Holistic Dental Websites

According to its Quality Raters' Guidelines, the lowest page quality results include "Pages that directly contradict well-established scientific or medical consensus for queries seeking scientific or medical information, unless the query indicates the user is seeking an alternative viewpoint." Similarly, Google's SEO starter guide states: "Representing well-established consensus in pages on scientific topics is a good practice if such consensus exists."

This can be especially problematic for holistic dental websites. For example, imagine you have a page stating, "Amalgam fillings pose a significant health risk." You would be directly contradicting the CDA (Canadian Dental Association), which states "scientific evidence indicates that no significant risks are involved." A search term containing words such as holistic or alternative

medicine would likely indicate that the user is seeking an alternative viewpoint, in which case this page might be considered high quality. However, if someone is looking for general information about dental fillings, Google would consider the page low-quality.

What You Can Do About It

Since Google's algorithms and ranking factors are not made public, no one knows exactly how it seeks to determine which pages present information that contradicts the general scientific and medical consensus. However, there are a few strategies that have proven successful in overcoming the search engine's apparent bias. These include:

Present both sides – This type of content explains the generally accepted consensus and presents the so-called alternative viewpoint. Rather than stating your view as fact, it is presented as a comprehensive overview of the debate, which leaves the reader to make up his or her own mind.

Tailor content to the keyword – You can save controversial information for pages that target queries indicating the user is seeking an alternative view. For example, discuss the risks of amalgam on a page with the keyword holistic dentist for mercury-free filling. Discuss more widely accepted information such as the procedure and the cosmetic benefits of composites on a page with the keyword "dental filling near me."

Have detailed dentist bios – Naturally, Google is suspicious of bloggers and other unqualified individuals dispensing medical advice. Since your website represents an actual dental practice, and one or more properly certified dental professionals, you have an automatic advantage in establishing authority. However, you need to make sure this information is obvious to human visitors and Google bots alike. Include bios on your website and be sure they indicate your licensure.

Make individual pages authoritative – Many websites benefit from summary bios (small blurbs, usually at the bottom of the page or in the sidebar) on each page. Additionally, include author information for each article. Let Google know that it was written or approved by a dental professional.

Backlink building – When a website links to yours, Google considers this akin to a vote of confidence. That site essentially passes a bit of its authority (or lack thereof) to you. If you have no backlinks, then your site appears weak or irrelevant. If you have backlinks from spammy or low-

quality sites, then Google will assume your website is similar. However, links from high-profile, high-quality, relevant sites such as professional dental associations show Google that you are an authority, and your site is to be trusted.

Manage your reputation – Never underestimate the importance of online reviews. Same as with backlinks, reviews are like votes of confidence, except they come from actual patients, rather than organizations. Abundant good reviews tell Google that you are providing a quality service, which is essential in local SEO. A simple way to acquire more reviews is to simply ask. A happy patient is generally willing to rate your practice, especially if you make it easy for them by providing links and instructions.

Include references – If the information in your content may be controversial, try to cite research studies or links to articles at established reference sites to support your view. This helps establish credibility with readers and with Google.

Fine tune your technical SEO – While E-A-T is extremely important, it is not the only thing Google looks for. Factors such as loading time, mobile friendliness, good meta tags, and other behind-the-scenes aspects can make or break a website's search performance. Since holistic websites face unique challenges in creating Google-friendly content, it is essential that you excel at other SEO techniques.

Stay ahead of the curve – Another tactic that can give you an edge over the search competition is embracing emerging trends. For example, voice search is a rising technology, which favors FAQ pages, question-based page titles, and articles written in conversational tone. Many sites are not yet optimized for voice search, so yours can be one of the first.

It might feel like digital marketing is more difficult for holistic, biological, and integrative medicine websites. You are not imagining the challenges. It is more difficult. However, it is not impossible. You are probably accustomed to facing some pushback to those dedicated to the current mainstream medical model. You would not have chosen a different path if you were not prepared to face and overcome obstacles. If you apply the same determination, passion, and perseverance to your marketing strategy, you can overcome those obstacles as well.

About the Author

Naren Arulrajah, President and CEO of Ekwa Marketing, has been a leader in medical marketing for over a decade. Ekwa provides comprehensive marketing solutions for busy dentists, with a team of more than 180 full time professionals, providing web design, hosting, content creation, social media, reputation management, SEO, and more. If you're looking for ways to boost your marketing results, call 855-598-3320 for a free strategy session with Naren. You may also text at 313-777-8494 to schedule a session at your convenience.



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