

Let National Campaigns Be Your Muse!

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Take your marketing efforts out of the shadows this summer.

Spreading the word and extolling the virtues of your practice should not take a holiday, even during the dog days of summer. There are numerous opportunities to shine a light on and take a big bite out of some of the biggest barriers to drawing more loyal, quality patients to your office.

Some of these opportunities directly address access-related challenges within the broader healthcare industry and system. This summer, we drew inspiration from three notable and relevant awareness-oriented [campaigns](#). Mould your campaigns around the topics, issues, and events represented by these extensive, highly intentional awareness efforts.

June: Canadian Men's Health Month

A diverse patient base supports a financially healthy practice and, moreover, a healthy and equitable community and happy society. However, as noted by researchers featured in the American Journal of Men's Health, sex- and gender-associated disparities present an

“underappreciated” and “often overlooked” part of overall well-being. Specific to our discipline as dental professionals, we noticed that men (when compared to their female counterparts) are:

- More likely to ignore the health of their teeth, gums, and mouth.
- More likely to have poor hygiene habits and behaviours.
- Experiencing gum disease at higher rates.
- Diagnosed with oral cancers at higher rates.
- More likely to sustain traumatic dental injuries.
- Less likely to have a positive attitude about visiting the dentist.
- Less likely to visit the dentist in general.
- Less “literate” when it comes to oral health conditions and related topics.

Additionally, researchers pointed to the risks associated with “immune system factors” and “hormone differences.” In addition to increased use of snuff and other tobacco products and lacklustre hygiene behaviours, biological predictors reinforce that disparities on this front are decidedly “multi-factorial.”

For oral cancers, further references included gender disparities related to alcohol consumption, prolonged sun exposure, and inadequate sun protection. The latter point is particularly beneficial when considering topics to pursue as marketing and promotional content to coincide with this summer awareness campaign. Given that we are generally spending more time outside, meaningful and valuable content could take a deeper dive into how oral pre-cancers and cancerous tumours are not merely limited to the tissues inside of the oral cavity; broadcast how the lips, for instance, are very delicate and vulnerable to the harmful effects of ultraviolet radiation. So, they deserve our patients’ attention and care, too.

Visit the “home” for Canadian Men’s Health Month to get into the spirit! There may be intersections of systemic health and oral health, which are well-suited to content ranging from website articles and blog posts to video and audio transcripts, and even a series of concise social posts. Drawing from some of the issues spotlighted by the sponsors of this annual campaign, we suggest promoting carefully crafted, helpful, and entertaining audio-visuals related to:

- The effect of poorly managed, negative stress (distress) on the health of the teeth and gums.
- The steps your practice takes to minimize further stress (an excellent opportunity to promote everything from sedation dentistry to a relaxed early morning, late evening, and weekend schedule.)

- The five (to 10) biggest mistakes made when brushing and flossing, and what to do instead – taking direct aim at gender disparities with oral hygiene and literacy.
- The overlooked effects of tobacco use and the use of other products that contain harmful substances like nicotine (yes, including vaping!); for instance, your team could highlight how smokers have poorer wound healing after treatments.
- Simple changes, conveyed in a relatable way, for patients to introduce into their day-to-day to keep their teeth and to add years to their lives – here again, discuss the intersection of the systemic and lifestyle with oral health (topics may revolve around “tooth- and gum-friendly” foods.)

July: National Injury Prevention Day (NIPD)

Get a jump on Parachute’s seventh annual injury prevention day observation on July 5th by scheduling posts and other content toward the end of June and as Men’s Health Month winds down. Possibilities for content could include snappy, short posts that feature alarming tidbits (hello, “wake-up call!”). Notables include:

- Unintentional injuries are the leading cause of death among younger Canadians aged one to 34.
- Injuries cost our economy almost \$30 billion annually.

The services provided within your field to prevent or resolve injuries are generally not of the mortal sort; however, it is no less essential to highlight the leading, overlooked causes of oral injuries. A good starting point and source of inspiration is the CDA’s Dental Safety and Emergencies online hub. Here, plenty of content is available and directed toward injury prevention for adult and pediatric patients alike, as well as on mouthguards and varied types of dental injuries (and what your patients can do about them when moments matter to save a dislodged or avulsed tooth).

Consider complementing and coordinating multi-media content with promotions; for instance, suggest a free consultation on custom mouthguards or a discount on an associated preventive service. In addition, the campaign you wish to link to this awareness timeframe and related content should bring under-utilized or novel services out of the shadows.

This national campaign is also an ideal time to roll out or revisit marketing loyalty programmes and membership savings plans that are, by their nature, heavily prevention-focused and tend to align well with the slips, falls, sports mishaps, and emergency care variety of oral concerns. It is also an appropriate time to revisit access in general. For example, what system do you have in place to

respond to after-hours questions? Truly urgent matters? With a better understanding or even a revamped approach to addressing emergency concerns, you will be well-positioned to market those new, improved, or underused services.

And, for heightened exposure, remember to #. A leading nonprofit organization specializing in injury prevention, Parachute uses the following NIPD hashtags: #ParachuteNIPD and #TurnSafetyOn. Last year, these hashtags accrued more than 5.6 million impressions on social channels. So, do not let this potential goldmine for exposure pass you by when planning your approach to this year's campaign.

August: United Nations International Youth Day

As summer winds down, wind up marketing your pediatric services. These efforts could also tie in seamlessly and transition well from earlier promotional and marketing content and initiatives around injury prevention. But wait. I do not treat many pediatric patients. And I want to focus on something other than that branch of dentistry.

No worries! We must emphasize that, historically, this day (August 12th) has presented an opportunity for the UN to focus on intergenerational themes and how excellent health transcends the number of candles on the cake. Notably, there are numerous ways and channels to discuss how age is not a disease and should not be immediately correlated with the loss of teeth and dentures. Other generational ties for you to explore may include the connection between genetics and conditions like periodontal disease. Or highlight the links between parents' oral health habits and the state of their children's teeth (the "role modelling" effect).

As a family dental practice, the days leading up to and after this awareness day are ripe for the picking – and for potentially marketing all of the ways your team makes things easier for busy, active families. Think beyond the obvious, such as services like dental sealants for developing mouths or products to fight dry mouth in older patients. Consider everything from promoting the ease of parking at your practice or using parking validation to flexible scheduling allowing multiple family members sessions on the same day. While these might be small details for you, compared to the services and treatments, these considerations can have a tangible impact on families who are in-between dentists or may be new to your city or town.

Notice a theme here? Ultimately, much of what we encourage this summer and well beyond can be crystallized as "access," the environment created and fostered by your associates and staff. That can either hamper or help draw loyal patients to your doors or Zoom room. Likewise, let the

creation of intentional, educational, entertaining, and high-value marketing and promos also bring potential areas for improvement within your business to the surface.

Uncover inefficiencies or weaknesses that speak to your operations. For example, a review may reveal that current office hours must align with your targeted demographics. Likewise, a hard look at some of these features of your practice may zero in on how healthcare shoppers' initial texts or calls leave much to be desired; à la being put on hold frequently for all, but the most urgent of calls is a death knell for first-timers. Such situations may demand employee training or scrutiny of staffing levels, scheduling, and time management.

Happy evaluating and communicating to your ever-growing community of “brand advocates”!

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 schedule a session at your convenience with the Senior Director of Marketing – Lila, by clicking

<https://www.ekwa.com/msm/> or simply send a text to 313-777-8494.