

Picture Perfect: Your Guide to Dermatology Website Photos



Capture the full benefit of photos by choosing and using the right images.

BY NAREN ARULRAJAH

>> In-depth articles on your dermatology website are great for potential patients doing research, and they are essential for SEO (search engine optimization). However, a long block of text looks boring and overwhelming to the casual visitor. Photos—and plenty of them—are the key to a visually appealing, patient-friendly website.

TAKING STOCK OF STOCK PHOTOS

You might wonder if you need to take pictures for your website at all. Stock photos are widely available and affordable, with virtually every imaginable subject matter. These images tend to have a vaguely generic quality. Furthermore, if a doctor is shown in the picture, then people will expect to see that face in your office.

Real photos of your office and your staff help the website to stand out, reflect your branding, and draw in the viewer. Stock photos are not necessarily a website killer, but they are almost always second-best. However, nothing is more off-putting to the viewer than a page devoid of imagery. Feel free to use stock photos temporarily, or per-

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manently if necessary, but try to choose high-quality and convincing ones.

LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR USING PATIENT PHOTOS

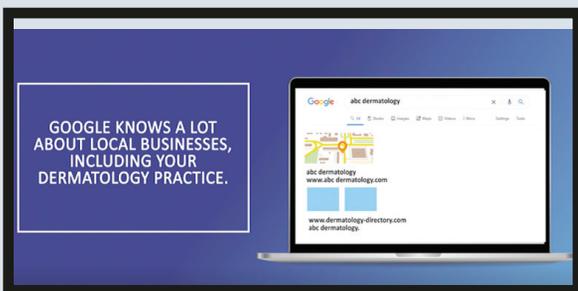
The decision to use real photos is not yours alone to make. Many of the pictures you’ll need (i.e., in-progress treatments and before/after) feature patients. There are a couple of legal considerations here. First and foremost, HIPAA forbids sharing a patient’s image or information without his or her explicit permission. Furthermore, even in non-medical contexts, you need permission to use a person’s image for commercial purposes.

Verbal agreement is not enough, you will need written permission. This obligation can be met with a template form, preferably one drafted or reviewed by a lawyer. It is a simple step, but an essential one to protect yourself legally and protect your professional reputation.

TIPS FOR TAKING PROFESSIONAL QUALITY PHOTOS (WITHOUT A PROFESSIONAL)

In the age of smartphones, it is often said that everyone is a photographer. That’s not quite true. Although nearly everyone has a high-quality camera in his or her hand, not every snapshot is quite up to pro standards. The good news

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Four Types of Photos Every Dermatology Practice Needs

- **OFFICE PHOTOS.** Let people see inside your reception area and treatment rooms before scheduling an appointment. The ideal number and prominence of images depends on your office. If the facility is quite basic with minimal amenities, one or two pictures on the “About us” page will suffice. However, if you’ve invested in high-end furniture and décor or the building is architecturally appealing, feel free to show it off with multiple photos across your website. An office tour video is also a nice touch, and a great way to introduce yourself along with your practice.
- **TREATMENT PHOTOS.** People like to see what to expect. While most practices have a page of before and after images, people might not click on it. Also include these photos on procedure pages. Pictures or videos of a procedure in progress can be good adjuncts to an article explaining the process. However, be careful of overly clinical (i.e., gory) pictures of in-progress surgeries or similar procedures, as they might deter potential patients.
- **STAFF.** In the era of easy digital publishing, anyone can put up a reasonably professional looking website. What today’s patients are looking for is the human aspect of your practice; they want to put a face with a name. At minimum, you need a photo of the doctor along with his or her bio. However, in order to give your website a truly personal feel, it is best to include pictures of other clinicians and staff members. Candid pictures, such as from office birthday parties, are also great for social media.
- **DESIGN ELEMENTS.** In reality, most people won’t read most of your content. What they probably will look at is subheadings, simple bulleted lists, photos, and captions. Even on pages where you don’t need pictures to convey the message, you will likely need them for aesthetic appeal and caption opportunities. This is where stock photos most often come into play, but make sure they are appropriate and patient-inviting.

is that you don’t have to hire a professional to take great pictures for your dermatology website, you just need to follow a few simple “rules of thumb.”

- **Lighten up.** Choose a brightly lit room if possible and add lighting if necessary. Equally important: be aware of the location and angle of light sources. Be sure the photographer is not blocking light and that the subject is well illuminated. Also watch out for angles that might include your own shadow or other unwanted shadows in the shot.
- **Set the stage.** The backdrop is one of the most important and often overlooked aspects of good website photography. When taking patient photos, avoid backdrops that are similar to the person’s skin tone. You want enough contrast that the subject stands out, but not something that creates a displeasing color combination. For office photos, look for and eliminate clutter, personal items, or anything else that might detract from the professional appearance of the picture.
- **Don’t lose focus.** If you are taking a photo of your receptionist, don’t try to capture the artwork on the wall and beautiful décor in the same shot. Keep the subject of the image relatively centered in the frame, with minimal distractions.
- **Hold still.** Nothing looks more unprofessional than a blurry image. If you don’t have a steady hand, consider using a tripod or finding a stable place to prop your phone.
- **Give yourself options.** One of the greatest benefits of digital photography is that it’s free. Unlike old film cameras, you don’t have to pay (or wait) for pictures to be developed, so there is no need to be frugal. Take more shots than you think you’ll need and choose the best ones for your site.

PICTURE PERFECT

Don’t be afraid to be your own photographer. All you need for great website images is a smartphone and a little practice. You will be rewarded for the time investment with a better, more engaging website and more leads. ■

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 dermatologists, with a team of more than 180 full time professionals, providing web design, hosting, content creation, social media, reputation management, SEO, and more.

Questions about improving your website or improving SEO? Call Naren at (855) 598-3320.