

How Your Medical Website Can Dominate Local Search Results

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In Google's infancy, a local doctor's office didn't have much chance of topping search results for most queries. You were competing with the entire internet for those top spots. Today, Google's algorithm is smart enough to know when searchers are looking for a local business, and results are filtered accordingly. That means you don't need to dominate the internet, just your service area. It also means you need to understand the rules of local SEO (Search Engine Optimization).



How local SEO is different

Think of it this way. Classic SEO is about optimizing your website. Local SEO revolves around optimizing your practice's online presence, including the website and beyond. The most glaring difference between the two is demonstrated by citations and links.

In classic SEO, the general goal is to acquire inbound links from the most authoritative, highest-ranking domains possible. The general theory is the more links the better, providing they are from quality websites. A link from a small, low-traffic website is virtually useless; a mention (citation) without a link is completely useless. However, in local SEO, both of those can be valuable.

What are citations?

A citation is essentially a mention of your practice, somewhere on the internet. In many ways, SEO citations are akin to those found in the footnotes of a research paper. When you see the same study or expert cited repeatedly on various papers, you probably assume that the source is credible. Similarly, references to a business help Google confirm its validity.

Google uses citations to gather details about local businesses. When it finds matching information on multiple quality sites, it has a high degree of confidence in the accuracy of that data. A business with few to no citations might not even exist. If there are multiple listings with variations in NAP (name, address, phone number) they might be different businesses, or the details might be wrong. Therefore, inadequate or inconsistent citations can keep your medical practice out of the top spot on local search results.

Building citations and local links

There are two basic types of citations, structured and unstructured. Both are important.

- *Structured citations*

These have specific fields for name, address, services offered, and other types of information, which makes it much easier for Google to find specific data. This helps validate your NAP.

Structured citations are often found on directories and similar websites where you can add a business profile and update information as needed. Start by claiming and optimizing your Google My Business profile, if you haven't already done so. The next step is adding your practice to other local business listings, review platforms, and healthcare provider directories.

• *Unstructured citations*

This is a less formal type of citation, which doesn't follow a specific format or have data fields. Unstructured citations might be mentions of your practice in blog posts (not your own blog), news articles, or patient information websites. They can be more difficult to acquire and manage because they often come from earned media. For the same reason, they can be helpful in building authority.

Sometimes you can get local links simply by asking. For example, if your practice donates to a local charity, ask to be listed as a sponsor on their website. Always make yourself available to local health reporters, who often seek expert commentary. Additionally, hosting events and community involvement are great ways to gain local media attention.

Conclusion

Standard SEO best practices are just one aspect of local search marketing. As brick and mortar businesses, medical practices need more than domain authority. They also need local authority and credibility, and they need citations to prove it.

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 doctors, 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.