

Your Dermatology Website: Get in the Game!

Don't build a website "because everyone else has one." Build a tool that sets your practice apart.

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Everyone knows the importance of having your own business website as a critical tool of marketing and publicity. However, the number of businesses, professionals and service providers that do take their websites seriously continues to be surprisingly low.

According to an ongoing research project from Conductor Inc., more than half of "Fortune 500" companies have almost no search engine visibility, with their targeted keywords not ranking in the top 100 search results.

THE OPPORTUNITY

An overwhelming majority of dermatologists have yet to realize how much their practices may benefit from a powerful website and a well-orchestrated SEO campaign developed around the website. This creates an opportunity for early birds who understand online marketing to seize the advantage and reach out to the largest number of potential patients in their local area at the lowest possible cost.

Potential patients are increasingly relying on the Internet to find good cosmetic and medical dermatologists in their area. With more than 80 percent of all American Internet users looking online for information on specific conditions or treatments, an informative and user-friendly website becomes a doctor's most effective means of connecting with potential patients.

KEY SECTIONS OF A DERMATOLOGY WEBSITE

A comprehensive dermatology website must provide information in distinct sections. It is quite like a well-organized library, where the reader must be able to access the precise information he or she is looking for, with minimal effort. A few critical sections are listed here, and should be a part of every dermatologist's website.

Procedures Offered. Your dermatology website must include a prominent section detailing the procedures and services offered within the practice. Potential patients are looking for information about the latest procedures, how they are

performed, effectiveness, recovery period, potential risks and side effects, and estimated cost of the procedure. It is also pertinent to include information about the latest technologies and equipment available to perform the procedures.

Before and After Pictures. "Before and after pictures" represent one of the most effective ways to explain the expected results of a procedure to a potential patient. Photos help patients make up their mind about specific procedures and also establish realistic expectations about results. Images must be chosen and presented with professionalism and sensitivity to achieve the desired impact.

Dermatologist's Profile. Most new patients want to know more about a dermatologist before they decide to schedule an appointment. This section should provide all the relevant information about the qualifications, certifications, experience, specialty areas, awards, honors and achievements, media features and ratings, community involvement and family background of the dermatologist. If there is a team of doctors in the practice, the website should ideally include information about each member of the team.

Patient Testimonials. The Patient Testimonials section is one of the most valuable sections of a dermatologist's website. Appreciative comments and recognition by the dermatologist's past and present patients is the strongest endorsement available from the perspective of a new patient. Testimonials help address the concerns of a new patient in the most authentic manner possible. They also enable the patient to make a decision regarding the choice of a dermatologist.

News and Announcements. One of the most informative sections of a dermatologist's website is the News and Announcement section, which offers excellent, current value to the readers. It can include any announcements of new procedures, new equipment or new additions to the dermatologist's team, or news about the latest developments in the field of dermatology. It can also include comprehensive articles related to the specific treatments and procedures

offered at the facility, or links to archived newsletters. A content-rich website with reader-friendly information encourages readers to spend more time on the site, which brings them closer to the dermatology practice.

Videos, Images and Reviews. A recent Pew Internet survey reveals that more than 25 percent of all adult Internet users have watched an online video about health or medical issues. Furthermore, 16 percent of all adult Internet users have consulted online reviews or rankings of doctors. Keeping these facts in view, a dermatology website should have a section that includes relevant videos, images and positive video reviews about the practice. These elements are an eloquent testimony that says more than what words can convey about the practice.

TIPS FOR A SMART DERMATOLOGY WEBSITE

Sometimes even a great website can lose its impact if the architecture and design are poor or attention has not been paid to ensure an easily navigable and user-friendly site.

Quick Page Download. The attention span of the average Internet surfer is extremely limited. Therefore, make sure that your website's homepage and every other page download quickly. The faster your website, the more it will be explored by an average visitor. To ensure a fast website, the pages must be short, but not too short to miss out the content and continuity. The pages can include hyperlinks for more readers who need more detailed information.

Easy Navigation. The reader should be able to navigate through your dermatology website conveniently. Anchor links and tables of contents (menus) should be available on each webpage, so that the reader does not have to go back to the homepage each time. Having each area of your website visible on each page also helps Google to index your website properly and increases the ranking of inner pages. A site map should also be a part of the website to provide a quick overview of the entire site. A site "search" feature can also add to the user-friendly quality of the website.

Optimized Images and Videos. Images are an important part of a dermatologist's website. However, it is equally important to size the images optimally so that a balance between the speed and beauty of the website is maintained. Videos should download only when the reader gives a command for the video, and not automatically.

Error-free Website Content. The greatest website content can fail in its purpose if the reader is confronted with typographical and grammatical errors. Even a single glaring error is nothing short of a disaster for the professional image of the website, and in effect, of the dermatology practice.

Current Links. If the website includes broken links, it will not only frustrate the reader, but also lower the search rankings of the website. Broken links are a clear indicator that the

website is poorly updated. Regular updating of the website is critical to maintain quality and freshness and deliver new value to the readers regularly. In addition, Google loves a growing website. If you want to move up in search rankings, it is important to add new pages of optimized information to your website regularly and link them correctly.

Minimal Special Effects. A dermatology website should be differentiated from a typical commercial or jazzy website. The frills must not overshadow the content, and they should be used only where they enhance the content. Spinning graphics or logos can slow down your website, and a frustrated new visitor may leave even before the special effect finishes downloading.

Background, Text Colors and Fonts. The goal of your dermatology website must be to provide information to the reader in the most effective and pleasing manner. Busy backgrounds with light text colors or complex fonts can make it difficult for the reader to go through the content. Each webpage must be attractive, and reflect the practice brand, but at the same it must be eminently readable.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Contact information is the most important element of a dermatologist's website. It is a subtle call to action for a potential patient to get in touch with the office. The contact information must be placed strategically at various points in the website where the reader is most likely to feel the need to make an appointment or seek more information from the dermatologist's office. Calls to action may include options to call, submit email or request an appointment through an online form.

A great dermatology website is akin to a football stadium, where each section of the website represents a different entry point to the stadium. Each ticket holder to the game will enter the stadium through a different door, per the ticket. However, once all ticket holders are inside the stadium, they all enjoy the game from their individual vantage point.

Of course, a great game must always be played in a great stadium. That stadium, in the world of Internet marketing, is your dermatology website. ■

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