

Eight Essential SEO Checkpoints for Your Practice Website

Close attention to these critical checkpoints will ensure that your website's SEO performance is sustainable.

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Most dermatologists already have a website, but just having a good website is not enough anymore. With the barrage of search engine algorithmic changes introduced by Google, Bing, and other search engines, it has become important to ensure that your site is updated and in line with these changes. Conducting a comprehensive site audit periodically to review whether your website is in need of any revisions or updates is therefore essential. In doing so, it is important to avoid some very basic errors that can pull down the search rankings. Ahead are eight tips to increase the Search Engine Optimization (SEO) of your website.

1. REGULARLY UPDATED SITEMAP

Google's primary SEO guidelines for webmasters recommend having a sitemap for your website. This is helpful not only from the perspective of site visitors, but also from the perspective of search engine page indexing. The sitemap should include all the site pages that are indexable on search engines.

It is possible that your website may have a sitemap that was never updated, while your site was updated several times. If there are new pages added to your site, the sitemap should reflect those changes. Depending on the structure of your site, it may also be a good idea to have a separate sitemap exclusively for images and videos on your site.

2. SEARCH ENGINE FRIENDLY SITE CRAWLING

Title and Description meta tags for each web page on your site should be written accurately and reflect the

EIGHT STEPS TO TAKE NOW

- Update sitemap
- Check title and description meta tags
- Check download efficiency
- Ensure original content
- Add canonical tags, when appropriate
- Be user-friendly
- Develop organic links

essence of the page content. That being said, it is important to avoid keyword stuffing and repetitiveness of the tags, so that search engine crawlers can differentiate between two pages clearly.

Anchor text should be written correctly, and the site redirects should be managed smoothly. Additionally, if the site has any broken links, they should be cleared periodically. The alt text in the alt attribute should be used properly.

3. PAGE DOWNLOAD EFFICIENCY

Sites with high page download speed typically start receiving better traffic and witness an improvement in their search engine rankings. That's why it is important to check your website's page download speed periodically and compare the scores with previous performance. Google provides ratings to each web page based on its page download speed.

“Every piece of new content on your site should ideally be cleared through software tools, such as Copyscape, before it is uploaded on the site.”

To increase download efficiency and potentially boost traffic, avoid very heavy text, images, or videos in a single page. Also note that search engines will eventually downgrade a website with overall poor page download efficiency.

4. ORIGINAL CONTENT

If your website contains large amounts of text, images, videos and graphics, you may not even be aware that some part of the content may have been copied or stolen from other websites. That may be an infringement of someone's copyright, and the original owner of the content may file a complaint with Google and other search engines. Google has announced that such complaints could lead to the downgrading of your site's search engine rankings.

Every piece of new content on your site should ideally be cleared through software tools, such as Copyscape, before it is uploaded on the site.

5. CANONICAL TAGS

Sometimes you may use your own original website content at multiple locations within the site, or at different sites or blogs. In such cases, you should add canonical tags to the web page. This will give an indication to the search engine regarding which page should be considered as the primary (canonical) version. It will also avoid your website getting unnecessarily penalized for duplicate content. With canonical tags, you can build the SEO value and authority of a particular page URL and optimize the ability of the page to rank higher in search rankings.

6. USER-FRIENDLINESS

An ideal website should make its theme and purpose clear to a new site visitor within the first few seconds. Visitors should be able to navigate the site seamlessly. The critical site paths on your website should be highlighted to help a reader find exactly what he or she is looking for. Search engines also give preference to highly user-friendly and intuitive websites when assigning page rankings. Your website should also be compatible with mobile devices

because users are increasingly relying on mobile devices to view websites.

7. ORGANIC LINKS

In the wake of Google's Penguin updates, links have become the most scrutinized and most debated aspect of a website's SEO performance. It is now even more important to evaluate your website's link profile and weed out any unwanted links of dubious quality and character. Taking proactive steps to build high quality back links for your website organically is also essential. You can do this by engaging with leading online influencers, writing guest posts for major blogs and sites, inviting prominent individuals to write guest posts for your website, conducting effective PR exercises, and engaging meaningfully over social media.

8. ATTENTION TO WEB ANALYTICS

Keeping track of your site's analytics is integral to knowing the overall health and SEO performance of the site. Keyword analytics will provide you insights about whether your targeted audience is able to find your website through locally searched keywords.

If you have built a good local brand and reputation for your practice, you should compare between branded and non-branded searches that lead to your site. It may also be worthwhile to track each important web page individually in order to understand the strengths and weaknesses of each page, so that you can revise or re-do important pages that are not receiving the desired viewership.

SUSTAINABLE SITE PERFORMANCE

It takes a long time for a website to achieve top search engine rankings, and it is only prudent to ensure that the rankings are sustained for a long period of time once you have achieved them. That's why these eight critical checkpoints should be part of your periodic site audit. It goes without saying that all of these checkpoints will work only when your dermatology website content is of an outstanding quality and addresses the search queries of your target audience adequately. ■

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