

Make Online Reviews Integral to Your Dermatology Practice Marketing

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Online product and service reviews are an important influencing factor to sway the buying decision of an average consumer. A study conducted by BrightLocal indicated that close to 88 percent of consumers rely on online reviews as much as they would on a recommendation from a friend. Mobile and social media revolution has dramatically increased the access to online reviews.

According to one study of millennials, more than 50 percent of the respondents said they look for product reviews on their phones before making a purchase. With over a million video channels with product reviews, YouTube has emerged as one of the major sources for reviews. The audience for video reviews has grown rapidly, registering a 50 percent year-on-year growth in views.

1 BUILDING TRUST THROUGH REVIEW SITES

To build trust with new potential patients in a competitive environment, merely communicating through your dermatology website and blog may not be enough. Invest a part of your marketing effort in creating trust through third party review websites and consumer review sites such as RealSelf, HealthGrades, DrOogle, Yelp, and Google+ Local.

When a new patient searches online to find a suitable dermatology practice in their local area, these review sites will play a crucial role in influencing their choices. You can reach your target audience through these sites even before they find your practice website through Google and other search engines. If the patient has already received positive word of mouth referrals about your practice, the review sites can offer added positive reinforcement.

2 UPDATE ONLINE PROFILE

Websites such as Google+ Local and Yelp will automatically collect data and information about your practice through online directories to create a profile. However, such information may not be adequate or accurate enough to showcase your practice effectively. Therefore, it is a good idea to claim your pre-existing profile on these sites and update them with detailed and consistent name, address, phone number, the practice logo, dermatology team, office hours, website and social media links, as well as images and videos related to your practice.

The review websites will typically provide a link called "Claim your profile," which you can use to log into the site and provide verification of the ownership of your practice to make the necessary information upgrades and edits. It will improve the trust quotient when a reader finds detailed and consistent information about your practice, combined with a variety of online reviews from past and present patients. It is secondary whether the reviews accurately represent your practice. What is more pertinent is that a new patient can receive a better sense of the practice experience and feel more connected.

3 ACCURACY AND TRANSPARENCY OF REVIEWS

Your online reputation over time will be consolidated by having a free flow of genuine, transparent reviews on a trusted third party website rather than presenting only a sanitized selection of positive reviews via your own website. If the overall mix of reviews reveals a sense of authenticity about the practice, it will work in your favor in the long run. Fair and reasonable reviews will relieve you of the mar-

keting task of going out of your way to explain the positive aspects of your practice.

It is important to understand that the average online user is intelligent and will be more likely put off by disingenuous reviews rather than be impressed with them. Leading websites that host these reviews are also highly concerned about maintaining their reputation and an image of reliability. Their own credibility will be at stake if they allow their readers to be misled by disingenuous reviews. Therefore, they constantly use advanced algorithms to analyze user data, evaluate IP addresses and other unique identifying indicators, and flagging accounts designed to introduce fake reviews.

Inexperienced marketers sometimes make the cardinal mistake of employing dubious tactics to generate favorable reviews. This strategy is bound to prove counter-productive, and will end up destroying online credibility and trust for the practice rather than building it. Online reviews are a long-term strategy, which will yield continuous dividends if it is pursued in a fair and sustainable manner. A positive review will remain visible and searchable online for a long time, and will continue to deliver value for your online reputation.

4 HOW TO GENERATE MORE REVIEWS?

You can play a proactive role in generating a greater number of positive patient reviews for your dermatology practice. Whenever a patient speaks positively about their treatment experience at your practice, you may encourage them to express their views about their experience online. You may even have an online questionnaire, which you may request your patients to fill up after their treatment is over.

This questionnaire can include a section for comments or testimonials, and should seek patients' permission for

posting over your website and social media accounts. Additionally, you can actively engage with patients over social media, online forums and blogs, and foster online relationships that will often translate into positive reviews for your practice.

Create informative blogs, columns, articles and videos to improve your recall with patients online. When patients find satisfactory and useful information online, which addresses their queries, they will be more inclined to write positively about you. You can be proactive about seeking reviews without any apprehension of negative outcomes. As long as the positive reviews considerably outweigh the negatives ones, the net effect will be favorable toward your practice.

Online patient reviews should not be viewed in isolation only as an online reputation building strategy. It will also help in the long run from an SEO perspective. Google, Bing and other search engines take into account reviews on Google+, Yelp, social media networks and other forums, both in terms of quality and quantity, to determine the search rankings for a particular website. Therefore, investing time and effort in online reviews can be a long-term winning strategy for your dermatology practice. ■

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