

## Promoting Your New Practice -- for the Price of a Stamp

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Established doctors are those who create a professional "image," doctors whose names are recognized in the community they serve. A new doctor must compete against these established professionals, so there is an immediate need to establish an image for the new practitioner; it can be done for the price of a stamp.

Look for reasons to write letters to people in the community. Clipping newsworthy articles from the paper and sending them to the person mentioned in the article is an excellent "ice breaker." Everyone likes the recognition and an extra clipping. "Thank you" letters are especially appropriate for newspaper editors, chamber of commerce members, and other individuals who have given you assistance in establishing your practice.

When new patients make appointments, quickly follow with "welcome" letters, letting them know a little more about you and the fact that you really care about their overall good health. Likewise, if a patient comes to you through a referral, always send a personal note of thanks to the person who did the referring and more referrals will result. The person who refers patients to you is a unique breed and will continue to refer when encouraged.

If advertising in your daily newspaper, weekly newspaper, or shopper has been effective for you, write a letter to the advertising director praising the publication's effectiveness. Watch how fast they print your letter, (often with a copy of your ad), and it's a second insertion free of charge. Letters to radio and television stations could result in you being asked to be a guest on a talk show. When this happens, write your patients with date and time and ask them to tune in.

Regularly write letters to the editor of your daily and weekly newspapers on current issues, but be careful not to offend any segment of your community.

Don't forget to write to the local PTA, church groups, and other volunteer organizations offering to speak on appropriate topics such as drug/alcohol abuse, workers' compensation, personal injury, or scoliosis. The resulting personal contact is invaluable and you'll quickly become established as a health care expert in the eyes of many people.

Newsletters are another excellent way to promote your good name. General health tips as well as specific chiropractic articles are appropriate. Develop a mailing list from the people you meet. Provide a supply of newsletters to beauty shops, barber shops, laundromats, health clubs, health food stores, and senior citizen centers in your area. Co-promote with other professionals by giving them 100 of your newsletters for distribution in their offices and take 100 of their materials for display in your office. Your dentist, podiatrist, dermatologist, and P.I. attorney are excellent starts. Copies of testimonial type articles on chiropractic often make a strong appeal to emotions, but some states have varied restrictions on testimonials, check your state laws.

When attending professional seminars outside your community, it is always appropriate to remind patients that your continuing education will enable you to better serve their needs for professional

health care. Send patients postcards with a short note saying, "I'm at a conference studying new ways to help you stay healthy. I'll be back in the office (date), if you need to see my call (my C.A.) for any appointment." When you find the subject you are studying is directly related to a particular patient, include a memo to that effect.

Another excellent reminder-by-mail, is to tell the community that you are available for "Back to School" physicals. Send out a card or letter during August and introduce the parents of your prospective patients to your professional expertise. An interesting twist on this idea is to address the card to the child. Use you own patient list and people you have met that have school age children. Consult your city directory or you can rent a mailing list of families in your area.

In addition to letters, many publications will accept succinctly written articles pertaining to health subjects of current interest, or subjects about which very little is known. When the article is printed, send a copy with a personal note to all your patients. If it concerns personal injury, include P.I. attorneys, if it concerns workers' compensation, include industry officials, etc.

There are a myriad of ways to promote your practice for the price of a stamp. The possibilities are limited only by your imagination.

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