

Patient Reviews Management: Control Your Online Reputation

Glenn Lombardi

Google's recent local search changes have played a major role in the newfound urgency to monitor your online reputation. Now when potential patients search for a chiropractor in their town, only the practices with a physical location in that town will display in the search results. Appearing front and center with your contact information, patient reviews from Google and around the Web (e.g., Yelp, Dex, Citysearch and Insider Pages) are also visible from the main search results page.

How do all of these changes affect the local chiropractor? To put it simply, if you don't have a Web site, you need one. If you already have a site, it must be optimized for the search engines in order to earn first-page Google ranking for your location. And finally, if you didn't give much thought to patient reviews before, you now need a reviews management strategy to avoid having negative reviews harm your reputation.

Take Control and Defend Your Reputation

At a minimum, you should be monitoring your practice's reputation by conducting periodic searches to identify what information about your practice is accessible on the search engines. You may find that three, four or even 10 reviews have already manifested in various review sites online. If you're lucky, all of these reviews will be positive, but don't be surprised if one or two are negative. Let's face it: Even the most accredited and experienced chiropractor can't possibly satisfy every patient who walks through their door, but you can take critical steps right now to avoid potentially harmful reviews from getting out of hand.

If you have a Web site, then you've already taken the most critical step toward managing and building a solid reputation. Once you've established this critical foundation, you will need to implement a local search strategy. This involves optimizing your site for local search, claiming your owner-verified Google Place Page, submitting your Web site to local search directories and acquiring positive reviews from your most loyal and satisfied patients. A third-party provider can work with you to implement a local search-engine optimization strategy and natural reviews management program tailored for your practice's needs.

Understanding How Reviews Work

You're a doctor of chiropractic. Do you really need to be monitoring your online reputation? Are patients really talking about you on the Web? It may be hard to believe that online reviews have evolved beyond restaurants and plumbers, but today your patients are flocking to the Internet to read and leave reviews about you, your staff and your services.

Before starting any review management process, it's extremely important to understand that Google's rankings are based on natural, quality reviews and not a high quantity of solicited reviews. Reputable review sources such as Yelp are considered more trustworthy by Google because real, live people are visiting these review communities to leave natural comments about your chiropractic practice on their own accord. As such, their comments and opinions are valued

more than the opinions of people whose comments are solicited.

Actively petitioning, or soliciting, your reviews may be tempting, but this method is manipulative and can lead to even bigger reputation problems for your practice in the long run. Google actively tracks where reviews originate and uses advanced algorithms to determine the integrity of those reviews. A petitioned review is classified as less valid by Google under the assumption that it was not written under the same pretenses as a natural, unsolicited review.

Generate Quality, Natural Reviews

The most successful practice acquires reviews organically, a technique that is often achieved through good customer service and quality patient care. In short, if you take care of your patients, they will take care of you - not only by being loyal to your practice, but by commenting favorably on you and the services you provide.

You can also administer a process to encourage your most satisfied, loyal patients to review your practice. Make the process as simple as possible. Hand your patients a review card as they leave your office, with easy steps for leaving a review online. A patient who is pleased with your staff's overall service will be happy to take five minutes - that's all it takes - to review your practice. Acquire five to 10 reviews each month and within a year's time, you will have already generated enough positive reviews about you and your practice to negate any damaging comments that will inevitably emerge from time to time.

Use What People Are Saying to Your Advantage

Today more than ever, people are turning to the search engines and other trustworthy review sources to find everything from local restaurants and florists to hair stylists and auto repair shops. The Internet is the new phone book, and that means even a person's choice of a chiropractor is highly influenced by where your practice ranks on the search engines and what other patients are saying about you online. You can't prevent patients from reviewing your practice, but you can increase the number of positive reviews you acquire through an effective local search strategy and a natural patient reviews campaign.