

## Making Yourself Known

This letter recently came across my desk:

"I've only been in practice a very short time. I could use some ideas for getting new patients that don't involve patient referrals. I only have a few patients, but I'm satisfied that I'm doing okay with in-office referrals. Can you suggest something that won't cost me a lot of money and is simple to do?"

### New DC in North Carolina

I can think of two things right off the top of my head that won't cost you a cent. They do require that you get up and get out of the office. They also require that you put any false pride in the desk drawer when you leave the office. And they are ethical and professional.

### Doing a Little Legwork

First (but not in order of importance), I'd suggest that in nice weather you spend an hour of your lunch break walking through nearby neighborhoods ringing doorbells. Introduce yourself to those who are at home, and leave an attractive brochure about yourself and your office at every home you stop. Before taking your walk, write a comment on the brochures you'll leave at the homes where no one answers: "I'm sorry I didn't get the chance to meet you. Let me know if I can be of help."

It goes without saying that you should look neat and clean, like a professional person. If you are married, and your spouse and kids can join you on these walks, so much the better. There's no problem with letting people know you need business; you have mouths to feed! Your objective is not to recruit patients on the spot (although you can), but to introduce yourself to people who live right in your office's backyard. You want to let them know that you are close, you are convenient, and you are such a nice young doctor!

Don't go in and have a visit. Just stand on the porch and have a brief chat, give them a brochure, tell them you are ready to help them and their family, shake hands, and say goodbye. Try to cover as much territory each day as possible. Do a follow-up mailing to each home, telling them you enjoyed meeting them/are sorry you missed them with another piece of literature promoting you. Right now you are selling them on you. If they come in, then you can begin the job of educating them.

### Make Dining out Pay Off

Another favorite of mine is the "21 meal new patient diet plan." Make a grid of the seven days in the week, showing three meals a day. Decide which meals you would ordinarily eat out. Mark them on the calendar. Choose a number of family and business-people restaurants. Choose the kind of place where the owner is usually seating people and running the cash register. This isn't going to work at the typical fast food places. You need to become known by name to the owner and servers. Be sure they attract the kind of people you'd like as patients; take a good look at the customers, cars in the parking lot, etc. Fill those names out on the grid. Yes, actually fill it out!

## First Visit

On your first visit, ask for the owner/manager on entering. Introduce yourself, give a business card, and explain that you've been meaning to try their place because you've heard the food is great, the waitresses are beautiful, the service is quick, whatever. Say goodbye when you leave, and always make sure to use their name.

Be sure to get your waitress' name; tell her what a nice place it is and what a pleasant person the manager/owner seems to be. Thank her by name and leave a nice tip; 20% is about right. Never leave a tip less than a dollar or not so big that they wonder, "What's he trying to prove?"

## Second Visit

On the second visit, greet the manager/owner by name. Ask how they're doing and make a comment like, "I thought I'd get over here for lunch, I've been so busy at the clinic this morning." Give them a nice brochure about you and your clinic.

If you get the same waitress, greet her by name and give her a brochure, or get the new waitress' name and ask her to say hello and give the brochure to the first waitress. Let her know it's okay to look at it before passing it on, etc.

## After Your First Two Visits

You should use the same procedure on following visits (minus the brochure). Always have a positive comment about a patient that you've been able to help, and how busy you are. Every month or six weeks, give them an article about health problems that chiropractic is effective for, with a very brief comment of why you thought they would enjoy it. You aren't necessarily looking to make them patients, but you definitely want to make them referrers.

The idea is to establish yourself in their minds as a busy professional who is a heck of a nice person, who always remembers them and who always has something good to say. Spread yourself around. List the restaurants and visit them each about once a week. Don't make one your hangout. Don't become a buddy to anyone. Project the nice young doctor image. The next time they ask someone, "How are you doing?" and get a negative reply, we hope that your name and face spring into their head, and they talk about "the nice young doctor who just opened up here recently."

If you ate out for every meal, you would eat in 21 different places in a week and make 21 positive contacts. If you have real trouble with names, jot the name of the owner/manager and your waitress right on the chart. Make a note of what brochures, etc. you've given them. Because you see them weekly, and after your first two visits in their place only give them something every 4-6 weeks, you aren't even remotely being pushy. And because you always make a comment about how much you "enjoyed lunch because you are going to need the energy for this afternoon," you always remind them who and what you are.

If your family occasionally joins you, introduce the manager and the waitress by name with a nice comment about how good they take care of you. These people are also a priceless source of community information and will include what they know about you in their pool of information.

Good luck with your new practice. Have a nice lunch and then go for a walk afterwards!

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Dear Readers,

I enjoy your notes and phone calls. As always, I'm happy to give a little advice free, but I won't pay for the phone call! Please introduce yourself when you see me at a convention. I'd love to meet you all.

*Kiki Herfert*  
*Grosse Pointe Park, Michigan*

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