

## A Special Target Market

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From a marketing standpoint, there is a type of patient in your practice who deserves special attention: patients who are the most profitable. These are patients who share an extremely important characteristic: they spend a lot of money in your office at minimal marketing expense to you.

These patients form the core of your practice. They come back to you year after year for treatment of a variety of conditions. Many times, they regard you as their family doctor. They will come to you first for every malady they have. They trust you. They know that if you refer them to a different type of doctor, it is for this case only, and they will come back to you for diagnosis and treatment of their next health problem.

These patients also form the core of your referral business. If a friend or family member has a health problem, you will get first crack at it. That's because these special patients believe in you, and they are very persuasive in that belief. Your new patient may be afraid or suspicious of chiropractic, but your patient who made the referral certainly is not. He knows that you will do a good job for his friend.

This type of doctor-patient relationship is one that you should treasure. Over the long term, these patients form your professional family. They know it, and they expect to continue the relationship with you for the life of your practice.

Doctor, do you know who those patients are in your practice? Their identity is probably no farther away than your appointment book. They are easy to identify, because you see them often. But can you instantly name them, all of them? Do you have their names on a special mailing list? Do you nurture your relationship with them, each and every one? Do you offer them special reasons to continue coming to you for their health care, and for the continuing referrals of their family, friends, and neighbors? From a business standpoint, do you offer them special reasons to continue spending money in your office? If you can't answer all those questions affirmatively, then you are missing out on a potential gold mine.

This is a good topic for your next staff meeting. Your staff knows these patients as well as you do. Together, you and your staff should make a list of the patients who form your professional family, then devise ways to make them feel like the special group of people they are. With your staff helping you with brainstorming, you should be able to develop some effective marketing messages to show this very special target market that you treasure them. Give them special reasons to continue to be your most profitable group of patients.

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