

Leveraging Local Search: Recent Search-Engine Changes Can Bring You New Patients

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Have you heard the news? Google's new search-engine algorithms have changed the way this leading search engine "organizes information," giving both "location" and "reviews" a new centrality in how Web sites are ranked in the search-engine search results. Whereas before, your practice could still be listed on the map without a Web site, the new search algorithms are demanding your practice have a Web site if you want to show up on the first page for location-based searches. Now, the first seven search result listings can only be chiropractors who have a physical location in the town searched.

[Called Place Search](#), Google's newest search option is providing a single place for a patient to find everything they need to know about chiropractors in their local area before deciding where to make an appointment. This includes phone numbers, addresses, photos and reviews, without ever having to leave the search results page.

The patient reviews from Google and around the Web (e.g., Yelp, Citysearch and Insider Pages) are now prominently displayed next to your local search listing on the main search results page - placing greater emphasis on reputation management. The reviews determine your rating (one to five stars), which may influence whether or not a potential patient clicks through to learn more about your practice. Positive reviews translate to more clicks and a better click-through rate translates to improved search rankings.

Generating Patient Reviews to Increase New-Patient Appointments



The Web amplifies the power of referrals, and what used to only be possible face-to-face is now a major influencer of appointment-making decisions for patients on the Web. To start monitoring and managing your online reputation, your practice should first establish an online presence through a professional, interactive Web site. You also need to optimize your local listing for local search. This involves implementing an aggressive search-engine optimization plan, claiming your local Google Place Page, submitting your Web site to local search directories and acquiring positive reviews from your most loyal and satisfied patients.

With the new Google search layout, practices without a Web site won't be able to tell their own story online. Instead, they'll be relying on review sites and directories, many of which have inaccurate data and potentially harmful reviews. If you have a Web site, then you've already taken the most critical step toward managing and building your online brand.

Reviews: Really?

You're a chiropractor. 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. Typically, people agree with popular opinion. People may not believe everything they read online, but if negative feedback accounts for a major portion of your reviews, it may be enough to dissuade potential patients from contacting your office and motivate them to contact the practice down the street instead.

Make it simple for patients to give a review with as few steps as possible, focusing on the most loyal patients who have been continuously satisfied with your services and quality of care. This may include handing patients a card as they leave your office with easy instructions about how to leave a review from your Web site. The process takes time, but a professional Internet marketing company can provide the tools you need to build your online reputation with new local search.

A comprehensive practice Web site combined with an aggressive local search campaign and [strong online reputation](#) will ultimately result in more clicks and new patients for your practice in the form of Web site traffic, phone calls, e-mails and office visits. For chiropractors, this means establishing a Web presence and optimizing your site for local search is more important than ever to reach the increasing number of potential patients who use Google every day to find local health care providers.

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