Have Your Sites Set

■ LOU ELLEN HORWITZ, MA

Look out, world.

Have you "Googled" the term *urgent care* lately? You get about 2,870,000 results. (To keep things in perspective, entering the word *Beatles* yields about three times as many results; still, they've got a few years on us so we can work on that.)

Try this: enter the words "urgent care (your city)" and see what happens. Does your clinic's website come up? Does your clinical even *have* a website?

I can say with certainty that many of you do not, and that most who do are buried in the massive pile of 2,869,999 other listings that have some relationship to urgent care.

In many cases, I can put in the exact name of your clinic and get somewhere between zero and completely meaningless results. Sometimes a phonebook or map listing will appear on screen, but that's it.

So what does this mean for you? Hint: Your potential patients are having the same experience.

While not everyone uses the Internet to search for health information, about 80% of Americans do,[1] and if you want them to find you, you need to work at it a little.

Here are a few suggestions:

1. As intimated above, have a website. If you don't have one, get one. Even if the only thing someone sees on screen is your clinic name, hours of operation, directions, and a phone number, that's enough to help get them to your location. If they've come this far, surely they'll take the next step and pick up the phone or get to your location.
2. Make it clean and quick. This is not the time to spend money on fancy spinning graphics—put yourself in the place of the patient or worried family member

looking for somewhere to go for care. Remember, if they're looking for you, they need your help.
3. Make it reflective of your clinic and overall marketing strategy. If you are a pediatric clinic and want to attract the appropriate patients, put some time into a "look" to the site that will communicate friendliness and quality. If you are targeting a geriatric population, be sure you have big type and maybe photos of staff to make the potential patient less worried about not seeing "their doctor."

Health Topics Searched Online[1]

Subject of Internet Search	% of Internet Users
Specific disease or medical problem	64%
Certain medical treatment or procedure	51%
Prescription or OTC drugs	37%
A particular doctor or hospital	**29%**
Environmental health hazards	22%
Medicare or Medicaid	13%

These are just the basics, of course. If you'd like to move to the next step with online pre-arrival check-in to allow patients to get on a priority list, or other bells and whistles, by all means go for it!

Ask your community what they'd like to see in order to help you help them more effectively and efficiently.

And while you're at it, "Google" your main competitor. For some, those results may be the best motivation of all to get moving on your own site. ■

Reference
1. "Online Health Search 2006". Fox, S., Pew Internet & American Life Project, October 29, 2006.

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