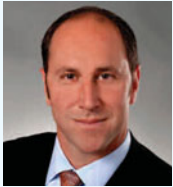




Patient Portals Part II: ‘Who’s That Practice Behind the Curtain?’



In my last column, I discussed the decision-making process around patient portals and proposed a systematic approach intended to mitigate risk, ensure security, and manage access. A portal, by definition, is an ‘entrance’—a virtual access point to a practice, its staff and patient medical records. The most common access point is a practice’s website and a well-designed one can enhance access, improve efficiency, and help sell your practice to new patients.

The two main purposes of a practice’s website are to introduce the practice and to help patients navigate through its resources. A website is often the first place prospective patients go to learn more about who you are, what you do, and why you are doing it. The key elements are as follows:

‘Who we are’

1. Clinician bios: A list of your practice’s clinical providers, their pictures and bios is as an important introduction to patients seeking care. Patients use practice websites to make early “relationship” decisions, much as they do with Facebook and LinkedIn. It is surprising how few practices take the time to introduce their clinicians to prospective patients online.
2. Practice leaders: The owners and management team should be listed separately from the providers.
3. Locations: Practice locations, maps, and contact information are critical components.
4. Facility: Pictures of the facility are an oft-overlooked way to tour a patient through your practice. If you have put the effort into creating a comfortable healing environment, then you should provide visuals that demonstrate that effort and attention to detail. Patients do care about it and the effort alone makes prospective patients feel that you take your practice seriously.
5. Facility Part II: With a little creativity and basic technical skill, you can provide a video tour of the facility. This not only gives you an opportunity to show people around the practice and introduce the staff and is an important chance to communicate your vision for the practice and views on patient care.
6. Social media links: Your webpage should connect with any social media presence you have.

‘What we do’

1. Services offered: This is, of course, the most obvious.
2. Forms, etc: Everything from sports physical forms to pre-registration forms can be included.
3. Online registration: With a little more technical know-how, you can include secure online registration that gets uploaded to your practice management software.
4. Billing and contact info, and even functionality for online payment can be added to your site.
5. A dedicated contact link that forwards to a specific e-mail address is important. Include a way for a patient to provide an email and phone number, to generate feedback.
6. Other instructional and interactive components can be added, depending on your patients’ or practice’s needs.

‘Why we do it’

1. Mission, Vision and Values: If you don’t have these, there are numerous free online resources that can help you get started. Mission, Vision, and Values are distinct entities and serve different purposes and no organization is too small to have them. Together, they serve as the guiding light for a practice and, more frequently than you might imagine, for patients. This is also a chance to differentiate your practice from the competition. A well-executed Mission, Vision, and Values statement can be a very effective internal and external marketing tool. It also keeps everyone in the organization accountable, both to each other and to patients.
2. Statement from the practice leader: This statement is an opportunity to connect the ‘Who,’ ‘What,’ and ‘Why’ in a more approachable and exciting form. It personalizes the experience and can be a real motivator. Patients want to feel a connection to the practice, and this is an excellent way to achieve that. ■

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