

7 Ways to Attract New Patients to Your Medical Practice

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Want to recruit new patients and increase referrals? Try these simple techniques.

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Promoting your practice doesn't have to be costly and time-consuming. We asked physicians and experts to share some creative ways to lure more patients into your practice. Here's what they said.

- 1. Get social.** "Have a professional website, a well-written blog, and an active Facebook page and Twitter feed," says consultant Audrey "Christie" McLaughlin, RN. "You must have a social media strategy to stay current — and continuous, shameless self-promotion will not work." Instead, post things that people really want to know, like practical information about your practice, as well as health-management information on particular common ailments.
- 2. YouTube.** Ask patients for permission to tape and post online an interview you have with them. Then use your blog to promote the online video. "This shows their audience (patients and potential patients) that the doctor likes to talk with his/her patients, and that they treat 'X' conditions," says family physician Craig Koniver. "This also makes the doctor more 'real' and human, which is always a plus."
- 3. Become an expert.** As a holiday approaches, write an article on avoidance and treatment tips for common medical issues that occur that day (such as fireworks-related injuries on July 4). Then, approach a local TV news station with the article and volunteer to serve as a physician expert for a related TV segment. "You can hit a home run with local news media by contacting a patient or parent yourself and asking ahead of time if they'd be willing to talk to a reporter and be interviewed about what they went through," says orthopedic surgeon and marketing guru C. Noel Henley.
- 4. Give out.** Spread the word about your practice by offering patients brochures, pens and fridge magnets with your office information printed on them, and business cards, says McLaughlin.
- 5. Give back.** Target your volunteer efforts to attract the most relevant patients. If you're a primary-care doctor, volunteer for a sports team at a local high school; if you're an orthopedic surgeon, conduct safe exercise seminars at your local YMCA; if you're an oncologist, attend nearby cancer walks to answer questions. "There are no illegal 'kickbacks' to be had or worry about," says consultant P.J. Cloud-Moulds. "Just a presence in your community that shows you're here to help."
- 6. Ask for help.** Your current patients are a great opportunity for free publicity, says Henley. Ask them to make referrals to friends and family, and see if they'd be willing to post reviews and ratings to relevant websites.
- 7. Say thanks.** A little extra effort can go a long way. "Each new patient that comes in, send a handwritten thank-you card to the patient and to the doctor that referred them," says McLaughlin.

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