

## Marketing Your Services to Doctors

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To give you better insight on how to get into a busy medical practice and earn the money you deserve, I would like to share the story of my life path. When I was an intern four years ago, I was unable to keep my full-time day job as a financial advisor, so I decided to get my holistic health practitioner license and offer my services at a local day spa providing relaxing and therapeutic massages.

After six months of only getting 30 percent of tips, I finally realized this was just barely paying the bills, and I wanted to start saving enough money for my future practice as a licensed acupuncturist. With that in mind, I looked around town and eventually found an acupuncturist advertising on the school bulletin board with a room to rent part time for \$250 a month.

This was a good move for me because not only did I keep 100 percent of my tips for every massage, but it also set the groundwork for me to start marketing my business and allowed me to make the easy transition from a holistic health practitioner to a licensed acupuncturist without having to move my practice. Everything looked great until I realized that seeing six to eight patients a week would basically only allow me to break even. I advertised online and in the local papers, but that was hit or miss at times, and I really needed to focus on getting quality referrals. Then a light came on - instead of running around telling my friends and family to see me all the time, I decided to start marketing my services to doctors of internal medicine.

With that in mind, I developed my first series of personalized signature letters, which have consistently opened the door for me to speak with MDs interested in recommending acupuncture as another form of complementary medicine. After a series of appointments with different MDs in town, I realized one office visit with them wasn't bringing in the number of referrals I was expecting. Most MDs base their referrals on a series of meetings, and it takes time to develop that trust. I realized I was in competition with the drug reps in town and they were more established and entrenched in the medical community. They also had the cash flow to market themselves on a regular basis.

With a limited source of income to market myself to MDs on a regular basis, I decided to use a different tactic. With a slight change to my personalized signature letters, I narrowed my target audience to MDs who were not only open to the idea of recommending acupuncture to their patients as another form of complementary medicine, but also were open to leasing office space to an acupuncturist. I initially thought about marketing myself to all the MDs in town. However, after some research into this I realized it was very expensive and time-consuming. Instead, I took a more focused approach and talked to my acupuncture clients, friends and family members and asked them if they knew of any good internal medicine doctors who practiced a holistic and integrative approach to healing.

My first reply of interest came three weeks later from a well-established internal medicine doctor who was referred to me by a good friend. After three meetings with him, we both agreed this would be a good fit. He then extended me an offer to lease his office space at his medical practice for

\$1,500 a month. I told him I would like to think about it and would get back to him in the next couple of days. When I met with him two days later, I basically negotiated it down to \$700 a month.

Once I got settled and moved into the medical practice, the referrals were flowing in for the first three months. My income basically doubled overnight. My specialty was mainly focusing on treating internal medicine disorders. Most patients were responding well to my acupuncture treatments, but I noticed that most of the referrals for pain-related disorders were only showing about 20 percent to 30 percent improvement after their first treatment. Word got back to the physician that the patients really didn't notice a significant difference in pain relief, and he began to refer patients out to other specialists to treat the pain. I was at a crossroads of losing my credibility with the physician, so I asked around if anyone was getting amazing results treating pain. A fellow acupuncturist referred me to a seminar for treating pain with the major distal acupuncture points. I was initially hesitant but decided to take the two-day seminar.

During the seminar, the speaker pointed out major distal points for pain-related disorders. At the end of the seminar, he did live demonstrations on audience members who volunteered to be treated. After seeing him put in the needles and seeing how the audience members responded, I was amazed. I wondered whether I could get the same results at my practice.

With that in mind, the very next day I used a simple protocol he had taught for low back pain. After treating a series of 15 patients over the next three weeks, I noticed that most of them saw an overall 80 percent improvement after their first visit. At that point, I knew I had a bright future ahead, which enabled me to regain my confidence. With that in mind, I returned to the MD to share my results with him. He confirmed this with his patients and, the referrals started to flow my way again.

As I received more referrals, I started to encounter more complex cases for pain. Sometimes I didn't get the desired results I was looking for. With that in mind, I started asking my colleagues how to treat these specific ailments. Sometimes the advice helped and sometime it didn't. What helped was the experience I gained by just working on several patients and refining the methods for treating pain I learned in the seminar.

For example, instead of using all the major points for neck pain, I started to realize that certain points had a stronger and longer-lasting effect than others. With that in mind, I started to limit the amount of needling from 14 to 10 to eight to six needles for a variety of pain-related disorders for neck, back, shoulder, knee, elbow and wrist complaints. Refining the method I learned in the seminar for treating pain enabled me to treat multiple patients in an hour, generate more income and get even more amazing results. Another added benefit was that it provided my patients with an overall sense of comfort, especially when they knew I was going to limit the amount of needling for their specific ailment.

After a few months, the referrals started slowing down again, but instead of just asking for more referrals, I asked the doctor if he had five minutes for me to brief him on how his patients were doing. By doing this, I was not only able to update him on his patients' improvements, but it also reinforced the benefits of acupuncture and gently reminded him that future referrals would be greatly appreciated. In the end, it's all about developing a relationship with the MDs and getting the desired results for their patients.

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