

## Getting MD Referrals Doesn't Have to Be Hard: Three Practical Tips

Your last patient has just finished his treatment and after a full day at work, you're ready to go home and relax. It feels satisfying. But then thoughts start creeping in...

- "My schedule is emptier than I would like it to be."
- "Where can I find more patients?"
- "I should have more new patients by now."

In-person events and marketing opportunities are more limited right now. You've spent money on ads and mailers. You're trying to figure out this online marketing or social media thing, but it's not bringing in new patients.

Should you spend more money to compete with companies that advertise all over social media? What about those companies that call to solicit you for their SEO services? You just want to focus on providing the best possible care for your patients; not on discovering the latest marketing hacks.



Having a consistent influx of committed patients in your acupuncture practice is possible. Imagine if you had medical doctors referring a couple of patients per week to your practice. Even if you had 1-2 MDs referring 2-3 new patients/week, that adds up!

#### Why MDs Need You Right Now

Medical doctors have thousands of patients in their practices. Many of them need you. There is an expected primary care physician shortage in the U.S. Even with the expected number of primary care physicians, it's just not enough to keep up with demand. In fact, a report last year from the Association of American Medical Colleges projected a shortage of up to 139,000 physicians by 2033.

Acupuncture can help patients beyond what most conventional medical practitioners understand acupuncture is good for; but even if we just look at a small sliver of what acupuncture can be good for – the increasing pain population and concern for opioid addiction – there are many people who can be helped if MDs knew about you and your services.

MD referrals are an untapped avenue for bringing patients in the door in this climate. However, many acupuncturists feel intimidated or don't even think of this as an approach. They also don't know where to start. It doesn't have to be intimidating if you know what you're doing.

#### How Should You Get Started? Here Are a Few Ways

*Connect via mutual patients.* Your patients can introduce you to their medical doctors. Think about the patients you have a good connection with and who are getting really good results from your treatments. Ask them to introduce you to their MD. Think about what you'll say and how to approach them to leave a good impression.

*Record a short video.* Introduce yourself to the MD and share more about what you do and how you

help people. This saves time for everyone and it's not tied to a schedule. The MD can watch the video whenever they're available. (One way to get an MD to watch it is by developing an initial connection first – see above. For example, one effective way to develop that initial connection is through LinkedIn – see below.)

Keep in mind that there's a difference between them knowing about you and also wanting to send patients to you. Think about what you're saying in the video that will get them interested in referring.

*Reach out via LinkedIn.* Look for MDs in your area and connect with them on LinkedIn. Come up with a script you can use to reach out to them and book an introduction call. Depending on their area of expertise and how you can be helpful to them, personalize your outreach and get their interest right from the start.

### What Else Is Worth Knowing Before You Begin?

Before you start worrying about how you'll get people calling you and booking their appointments, think about yourself and your practice. What is unique about you? Are you communicating that uniqueness effectively? This is often easier said than done. Think about the following:

- What is your "uniqueness factor?"
- Why would people want to see you?
- How are you different from other acupuncturists and holistic health practitioners?

Then, think about how you want to communicate all that in a way that gets MDs interested and eager to hear and learn more.

### Make It a Reality

Once you have this new source of patients established and on firm ground, you can benefit from a consistent flow of patients in your practice for years to come.

Getting MD referrals is also extremely cost-effective because you're spending almost no money at all. Instead, you're building a meaningful relationship that's going to be valuable for both you and the MD for years long term.

Start developing your network of MD and provider referrals to start getting your practice busier! It doesn't have to be intimidating or hard. Imagine having a practice you can feel really good about – a practice that takes care of itself in terms of getting new patients in the door; and a practice that you're not having to always work so hard on. Now stop imagining and start making it a reality!

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