Increase practice income and earn new patients

A white paper from Enzymes, inc.
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Increase practice income and earn new patients

Whether a seasoned professional or a recent graduate, the most successful health care practitioner is often the one who chooses cost-effective, time-conscious marketing methods. As insurance costs skyrocket and consumers grow evermore leery of traditional medicine, complementary and alternative practitioners have a unique opportunity to earn the attention and trust of prospective clients. The following white paper is intended for the health care practitioner who is eager to learn, as well as implement, marketing techniques designed to increase income and attract new patients.
Take advantage of (inexpensive) online marketing

It’s not necessary to invest thousands to communicate with patients via the Web. In fact, successful electronic marketing campaigns are achievable for as little as $0, and most health care practitioners shouldn’t have to spend more than $500 to integrate Web-based marketing into their businesses. The biggest cost to your practice could be that incurred from waiting to use the technology, as consumers increasingly look to the Internet for health information.

A 2007 survey from Cisco, “Measuring the benefits of online health management,” found Americans seek medical information using Web sites and online search engines 44 percent and 33 percent of the time, respectively. These two resources ranked behind only doctors, at 61 percent. However, even as consumers regularly seek guidance from Web sites such as WebMD®, Revolution Health™ and HealthCentral.com, more than 60 percent of health care providers offer no online tools.

These trends present a tremendous opportunity for the practitioner who caters to those seeking reliable, easily accessible health information. At a time when health-conscious Americans place most of their trust in doctors and the Internet, it only makes sense that a combination of these resources would have significant appeal among those hungry for health knowledge. But how can the time-starved doctor take advantage of cost-effective opportunities in online marketing?

A Web site is a good start; however, to effectively reach and meet the needs of modern patients, the successful practitioner must go beyond the typical online billboard. A more comprehensive approach that combines a blog, online newsletter and presence within online communities could take your practice to a new level. And getting there might be easier, and cheaper, than you think.

Sites to see

Americans seek health information from Web sites 44 percent of the time, according to a Cisco study. Check out these popular health sites:

- www.WebMD.com
- www.RevolutionHealth.com
- www.Wellness.com
- www.SteadyHealth.com
- www.HealthCentral.com

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**Start a blog**

Probably the most inexpensive way to promote your practice is through the use of a blog, short for “Web log.” Blogs serve as platforms to easily share with the world written thoughts, photos, audio or video. They are easy to update, and they take relatively little technical know-how to create and maintain. Really, the only thing you need to start blogging about your practice is a computer and Internet access.

Several Web sites, such as WordPress.com and Blogger.com, offer free blogs that provide customizable templates. For example, you can change the look of your blog, add images or incorporate personalization tools, referred to as “widgets,” alongside your main blog entries. You also have the option to purchase your own domain name (i.e. a Web address of doc_example.com instead of doc_example.wordpress.com).

So what’s the advantage of a blog, and how will it help market your practice?

In its simplest form, a blog offers a low-cost way to promote your practice through correspondence with new or existing clients. Consumers can post comments, which you moderate, and ask questions pertaining to your blog posts. It’s a candid way to earn the trust of, and win business from, prospective clients. You’ll be able to establish your expertise on a variety of health conditions and therapies, as well as demonstrate your willingness to communicate and provide patients with individualized attention.

On a grander scale, a regularly updated blog increases the likelihood that potential clients will find information about your practice through search engines, and a good blog should help draw more attention to your practice’s main Web site. The addition of pictures of your practice, audio interviews or videos that explain...
certain therapies will portray your business as one that is adept in the latest technologies. Whether you consider yourself a cutting-edge practitioner or one who sticks with the tried and true, using a variety of online communications techniques will certainly increase your practice’s popularity on the Web.

Of course, it takes more than a blog and Web site — merely floating in cyberspace — to attract attention. A blog should be updated at least once a week, and successful bloggers usually attract the most traffic to their sites when they do this:

- **Regularly add content**, including expert analysis, photos, audio and video. A good blogger should respond promptly to those who comment on their posts.
- **Find a voice** and develop points of conversation. Posts should be opinionative, authoritative and informal; readers want to know the inside scoop, and they need a reason to trust bloggers’ expertise.
- **Use tags and keywords** that help Web surfers find blog posts through search engines. This is one of the easiest ways to “advertise” each post.
- **List business addresses** on Google™ Maps. This also is a simple way to help drive Web traffic to your blog or business Web site.

**Publish an e-newsletter**

Once you have established a Web site and blog, it might be a good idea to reach out to patients with an electronic newsletter. Similar to a blog, this communication tool is easy to create and manage, and it’s relatively inexpensive when compared to direct mail. Electronic newsletters can be simple, and a monthly or bimonthly publication might take only a few hours to produce. Several products, including Constant Contact®, iContact™ and emma®, offer...
user-friendly software with straightforward tools for formatting e-mails and managing campaigns.

Electronic newsletters provide a consistent promotional opportunity, as you can keep patients up to date with information such as holiday office hours or the addition of staff members, therapies or products. Patients will no longer have to wait months or a year to learn about changes to your practice, saving you and your staff the headache of repeatedly answering the same questions. Improved communications will likely increase patient loyalty and generate referrals. In addition, if you sell nutritional or therapeutic products, the e-mails present an excellent platform for advertising.

Although every issue of an electronic newsletter should offer the reader something of value, its content doesn’t have to be heavily researched or edge-of-your-seat entertainment. In fact, your patients will likely appreciate writing that is conversational in tone. They’re looking for a quick read to help them make the best decisions for their health. Examples of topics you can incorporate into your newsletter include the following:

- **Analysis of a recent news report** explaining the benefits of exercise or a specific nutritional supplement
- **Information on a new technology** or therapy now offered by your practice
- **Announcements and details of upcoming events**, including open houses and health screenings
- **Evaluations of health trends** or insight into therapies for troubling medical conditions
- **News about people** in your office who are expecting children, working on academic degrees or participating in charitable projects

**Click and deliver**

There are several companies that offer easy-to-understand software for electronic newsletter campaigns. Below are three of the most popular services:

- [www.ConstantContact.com](http://www.ConstantContact.com)
- [www.iContact.com](http://www.iContact.com)
- [www.MyEmma.com](http://www.MyEmma.com)
Whether you’re considering an e-newsletter or already have one, follow the best practices below to get the most out of your investment.

**E-newsletter best practices**

**Keep subject lines short and make them catchy.** For example, instead of “May Newsletter,” pick an interesting fact from the main article, such as “Five exercises that increase longevity.”

**Offer your patients news they can use** as opposed to simply providing self-serving promotions. There’s room to tout your practice along the side or bottom of your newsletter, but make sure the main content is newsworthy.

**Provide links to your Web site, blog and online shopping cart,** and be sure to make a newsletter sign-up form available. Also, use photos, graphics and attractive colors whenever possible.

**Make sure you obtain consent** before adding recipients to your contact list. A sign-up form can be made available in your office, or staff members can subscribe patients, with permission, as they check in or out. Of equal importance, **always provide readers with an easy way to unsubscribe.**

**Print out your latest newsletters** and make copies available where patients wait.
Use directories and social networks

If you haven’t already done so, make a note to create free business listings in as many online directories as possible. You’ll want to focus mostly on the “physician finder” or “find a doctor” Web sites, but also don’t ignore health-related social networks designed to link health care professionals with patients and fellow practitioners.

Most directories and networks are free to use, so there’s little risk and only a small time commitment to place your practice and expert analysis in front of hundreds, or even thousands, of new clients and colleagues. Two popular consumer-based directories include those available at Alijor.com and HealthProfs.com. Health care professionals can find online networks that cater specifically to their interests and connect them with others in their fields at IntegrativePractitioner.com and NutritionCircle.org.

In the directories, you’ll obviously want to include basic information about your practice, such as hours of operation, location and payment information. If the directory provides an option to include further details, be sure to list the modalities or therapies you offer, technologies you use and licenses you hold. Patients will be especially interested to learn about your experience, education and certifications. They also will appreciate easy ways to contact your practice or schedule an appointment.

There are several advantages to joining social and professional online networks. Some health-related sites will allow you to share your thoughts, experiences and expertise with doctors and patients alike, while others are strictly for professionals. No matter which format you choose, consider becoming a member of these burgeoning online communities for a number of reasons:

Help patients find you
There are several online directories that link health care practitioners with patients, and most are free to use. Check out these sites:
- www.Alijor.com
- www.HealthProfs.com
- www.AcuFinder.com
- www.LocateAdoc.com
- www.HolisticNetwork.org
- www.CedsDirectory.org
• Online communities provide **free advertising for your practice**, as knowledgeable responses to consumer inquiries will likely attract new patients

• You’ll have the opportunity to **take on a leadership role in your profession** — through blog posts, discussion boards and published articles — without leaving your office

• Discussions with practitioners and patients from around the globe could reveal insight that will help you **solve some of your most troubling cases**

• You might find new employees, purchase equipment or **stay up to date with professional events**, such as seminars, Webinars and podcasts

• They will point you directly to **product information, discounts and other offers** from companies that provide cutting-edge nutritional products and new technologies
As insurance costs soar and quality health care climbs out of reach for many, the demand for alternative care is likely to increase dramatically in the next five to 10 years. About 38% of adults in the U.S. already use complementary and alternative medicine, and 12% of children do the same, according to 2007 survey results from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Those numbers will more than likely grow as children and teens carry their health habits into adulthood.

Although some insurance providers cover alternative therapies, such as chiropractic and acupuncture, many patients pay treatment-related expenses out of pocket. These consumers are looking to avoid the high costs of traditional medicine, arduous medical procedures and potentially dangerous side effects of prescription drugs. What’s more, as the baby boomer population ages, it is increasingly seeking preventive care, achieved in large part through the use of nutritional supplements.

The top five reasons doctors recommend dietary supplements are 1) bone health, 2) overall health and wellness, 3) joint health, 4) heart health and 5) cholesterol maintenance, according to a report from the Council for Responsible Nutrition (CRN), which also found the following:

- Forty-eight percent of U.S. adult consumers take a variety of supplements regularly.
- Confidence in the safety, quality and effectiveness of dietary supplements continues to increase among American adults, with 81% expressing trust in such products, now subject to current Good Manufacturing Practices and adverse events reporting requirements.

At a time when more than 150 million American adults say they use dietary supplements each year, the CRN has found that a majority
of physicians and nurses also use the products. The council reveals that 72 percent of U.S. physicians and 89 percent of nurses use vitamins, minerals, herbs or other supplements, while 79 percent and 82 percent, respectively, said they recommend dietary supplements to their patients. U.S. supplement sales totaled nearly $24 billion in 2007, according to industry reports.

Given these statistics, health care practitioners encompassing several disciplines have a tremendous marketing opportunity in nutrition, as the products ...

- Support a **variety of health conditions**, protocols and therapies
- Help develop **long-term business** from patients who regularly reorder
- **Generate referrals** and help set health care practices apart from those of competitors
- Can be **used with several bioenergetic testing devices**
- **Provide an alternative** to nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, linked to serious gastrointestinal and cardiovascular side effects

Health care practitioners who sell nutritional products can choose from several distribution options, each providing flexibility based on desired profit and in-house resources. Many decide to store products in their offices, selling directly to patients. Others choose to sell supplements and have the manufacturer ship products to their patients, an option that eliminates inventory but requires staff time for billing. Finally, some programs allow the practitioner to recommend supplements and have patients order directly from the manufacturer, an alternative that cuts out staff time and inventory while still providing revenue. Probably one of the most profitable options, but potentially the most time consuming, is private label.
It’s never been easier or more economical for health care practitioners to earn continuing education credits. Now, it’s possible that the expense and time commitment previously associated with satisfying state requirements won’t overshadow educational and career-building benefits.

Online resources for continuing education are increasingly available, and many states allow practitioners to use the Internet for some, if not all, of their mandated hours. These convenient, cost-effective courses help professionals save on travel expenses and out-of-office time, while they also provide practitioners with the flexibility to choose from a variety of courses, some of which might better relate to their interests or improve their practices. Online courses could guide health care professionals into new modalities, therapies or protocols.

Health care practitioners can choose from many online courses, including the examples below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Malpractice</th>
<th>Risk management</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spinal manipulation</td>
<td>Sports medicine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio interviews with professionals</td>
<td>Pain management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s health</td>
<td>Philosophy</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Aside from fulfilling state requirements, continuing education credits help fill practitioners’ curriculum vitae and resumes, further elevating their professional status. These convenient and relatively inexpensive courses also could boost a practitioner’s reputation among consumers who hold in high regard a commitment to
education. Either way, the completion of continuing education courses, online or not, should be emphasized in marketing efforts.

Some online courses available for continuing education are interactive, while others are text-based. Costs can range from $0, for noncredit classes, on up to $16 to $50 per credit hour. About 40 states, as well as Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico, accept forms of online continuing education credit from chiropractors, according to *Chiropractic Economics*. In addition, about 20 states allow chiropractors to complete all of their requirements online. For most health care professionals, the amount of online continuing education credits allowed each year is a decision made at the discretion of state regulatory groups. Check out the requirements for your state at [www.ChiroCredit.com/stateApprovals/index.php](http://www.ChiroCredit.com/stateApprovals/index.php).

There are several Web sites that offer continuing education or sources for finding courses. Some of the more popular resources can be found in the chart below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health care profession</th>
<th>Online resource</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td><a href="http://www.CMEonly.com">www.CMEonly.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><a href="http://www.cforums.com">Contemporary Forums</a></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><a href="http://www.chirocredit.com">OnlineCE</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acupuncture</td>
<td><a href="http://www.Acupuncture.com">www.Acupuncture.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chiropractic</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ChiroEcoCE.com">www.ChiroEcoCE.com</a></td>
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<td><a href="http://www.fcer.mycourse.com">FCER Online</a></td>
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<td><a href="http://www.clevelandchiropractic.edu">Cleveland CC</a></td>
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<td><a href="http://www.palmer.edu/ce.aspx">Palmer College</a></td>
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<td><a href="http://www.OnlineChiroCredits.com">www.OnlineChiroCredits.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Naturopathy</td>
<td><a href="http://www.oregon.gov/OBNE/index.shtml">OBNE</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Another inexpensive, effective way to promote your practice and garner respect among others in your profession is to publish your written work. Whether it’s in a medical journal, magazine or local newspaper, a published article will provide free advertising and position you as an expert and trusted resource in your field. Your writing can appear as a regular column, a once-monthly research report or an occasional article offering analysis on a subject about which you are passionate. Whatever the format, a small sacrifice of your time will place your name and practice in front of thousands of colleagues and potential clients.

It’s not difficult to become a published writer. In fact, if your credentials and the subject of your article are a good match with the publication, editors will likely be eager to accept your writing because in order to fill each issue, many health care industry publications rely largely on contributions from practitioners. In addition, general circulation newspaper and magazine editors are always searching for experts who will help bring credibility and increased readership to their publications, and they often offer these writers weekly or monthly columns. To put it simply: They need you as much as you need them.

Editors will accept articles that are consistent with the focus of individual issues or standing sections. If you want to write an article on a particular subject listed in an editorial calendar, it’s a good idea to give editors about three month’s lead time ahead of the publication date when making a pitch. The same holds true if you’re trying to work your way into a regularly scheduled section, as editors will likely have these planned months in advance. However, if you’ve been holding onto an article or idea for some time, editors are often willing to accept written work on a variety of topics as long as the article is relevant to the publication and its readers.
As an example of subjects about which you could write, consider the potential topics below from the editorial calendars of select health care publications.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Publication</th>
<th>Editorial calendar topics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Chiropractic Economics</em></td>
<td>Nutrition Response Testing, Anti-Aging and Wellness, Electrotherapy, Herbs and Homeopathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Naturopathic Doctor News &amp; Review (NDNR)</em></td>
<td>Men’s Health, Pediatrics, Metabolic Syndrome, Gastrointestinal, Allergy Medicine, Detoxification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>HealthyAging</em></td>
<td>Light and Laser, Sun Health, Body Contouring, Facial Rejuvenation, Aesthetics in Primary Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Massage</em></td>
<td>Hydrotherapy, Thai Massage, Stone Therapy, Polarity Therapy, Acupressure, Lymphatic Drainage</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Keep in mind that even if your article provides useful information and perfectly matches a publication’s monthly focus, it won’t necessarily end up in print. Any credible publication has a set of guidelines, and likely a written contract and copyright agreement, to which you must first adhere. What’s more, articles pitched to peer-reviewed journals can undergo extensive evaluation from a board of medical professionals and editors before they are even considered for publication.

Writers also can expect, and must accept, a certain amount of editing for style, format and grammar. In addition, editors reserve the right to change an article’s tone, and they don’t necessarily need to consult writers when they make changes. One common misconception is that articles can promote a product or service, says Wendy Bautista, associate editor of *Chiropractic Economics*. Bautista says health care practitioners should write for the sake of sharing their expertise and educating the reader. Indeed, the marketing and career-building benefits will likely follow.
“Being published is just one more item to add to your list of accomplishments, and you can be seen as an expert in your field,” Bautista says.

In the case of *Chiropractic Economics* and other professional and consumer publications, health care practitioners gain recognition from a biography and photo that follow each article, and most publications will include a byline. In the biography, practitioners usually have the opportunity to list details such as their titles, credentials, experiences and contact information. If you have the time, make contributions to a particular publication four to 12 times per year. As with print advertising, it takes multiple impressions delivered on a consistent basis to truly develop name recognition and generate new business. There are other advantages to publishing your work:

- Colleagues will consider you a **leader in your profession**
- Readers will likely include clients who are most interested in and **most likely to use your services**
- An article provides a platform to explain in detail the therapies and protocols used in your practice, **building trust and reassuring potential patients**
- A column might help you earn recommendations via **word-of-mouth from people you have never even met**

In any case, and no matter what the publication, a good rule of thumb is to establish a solid relationship and keep in monthly contact with editors and publishers. Also, you might want to avoid publications that promise to print your work based solely on your intent to purchase advertising. Objective, credible publications will not expect payment, nor will they let advertisers influence content. If what you’re writing isn’t mutually beneficial to both parties — for the sake of improving health care — it’s time to work with another publisher.
Bioenergetic testing devices offer health care practitioners a noninvasive, fast and safe way to evaluate and improve patient health. The biofeedback tools, which are said to tap into the subconscious, provide insight into a patient’s physical and psychological state. After evaluating their patients, practitioners can use the machines to recommend or provide therapies, such as nutritional supplementation and other protocols. Whatever its capabilities, a bioenergetic testing device is a boon to any health care practitioner looking to provide patients with an effective alternative to expensive, and oftentimes laborious, medical tests and procedures. Some bioenergetic devices make whole-body health assessments possible in as little as 10 minutes and can provide health care practices with a tremendous marketing advantage.

Many practitioners who use bioenergetic testing believe that all humans possess a form of vital life energy and that any blockages in its flow indicate health problems, specifically ailments related to organs and organ systems. These devices, then, take some of the difficulties out of choosing which therapies will work best for particular patients, says Mary Stock, a certified clinical nutritionist who uses a bioenergetic testing device in her Florida practice. One of the major advantages of the machine, she says, is that it helps address the underlying cause of health concerns, as opposed to simply treating the symptoms.

“It can get to a problem quite quickly and help the patient feel better,” she says. “It is not expensive when compared to having the client get a blood test or a food allergy test. Our bodies are quite smart and do know what is wrong, and this is a way to tap into that intelligence and ‘ask’ the body for answers.”

In fact, there are some bioenergetic testing devices that figuratively “ask” the body to respond to “yes” or “no” questions regarding the
health of organs, muscles, nerves and glands. Machines referred to as electrodermal screening devices measure energy produced by the body at acupuncture meridian points, such as those on the hands. Attached to a computer and central-control platform, a probe is touched to these meridians to measure the flow of energy throughout the body. Any disturbance in this flow indicates health problems and helps practitioners recommend therapies that might help restore or maintain patient health. Many devices allow patients to view test results in real time through computer-generated graphics. Elissa Blesch, an acupuncturist who uses bioenergetic testing in her Colorado practice, says patients enjoy being able to observe immediate results during initial and follow-up evaluations.

“People like what I do because they can see what is being tested, what the response is, and, during follow-up treatments, what the change has been,” she says. “It confirms what they, in many cases, already suspected about themselves, and they love the confirmation that they know their bodies despite their medical doctor telling them their symptoms are all in their head.”

Popular bioenergetic testing devices include the IQS,™ BioMeridian,™ ONDAMED,™ Inergetix™ and Asyra,® Some devices use alternatives to handheld probes:

- **Electrodes** attached to patients’ heads, wrists or ankles
- **Radio frequencies** to assess and promote health
- **Electromagnetic fields** to evaluate energy flow
The following sponsors made this white paper possible.

Enzymes, Inc., can help

Please call Enzymes, Inc., at 800-637-7893, or e-mail marketing@enzymesinc.com, for more information on ways your practice can implement marketing initiatives described in this white paper.