

Patient Relations: Attention Grabbers

Technology is making it easier to talk to your patients. And they're waiting for you.

How do you typically try to get your patients' attention? Do you proactively manage your relationships with established patients? Do you promote your services to prospective patients?

Many practices spend their marketing dollars on the same products year after year. They take out Yellow Pages ads, print brochures, mail out periodic newsletters, and collect patient satisfaction surveys. Exploring how new technologies could better reach their current and potential patients rarely crosses the minds of most busy physicians.

But consider this: A recent poll of U.S. healthcare leaders, conducted by pathologist and writer Richard Reece, revealed that effective provider-patient communication is crucial to addressing the top three innovations survey respondents said are transforming healthcare. They are: 1) information technology tools that allow consumers to better manage and pay for their care; 2) consumer-driven healthcare; and 3) chronic care management.

Online tools deliver results, are cost-effective, and respond to the expectations of today's typical healthcare consumer. In a recent Harris Interactive poll, 77 percent of the adults surveyed indicated they would appreciate e-mail reminders from their physicians when they are due for a visit or follow-up care. Two-thirds of those polled expressed a desire to receive diagnostic test results via e-mail. The survey also indicated that the availability of online services may influence how patients select their healthcare providers.

Many patients are visiting interactive bulletin boards in search of healthcare information. Some read or create their own blogs on healthcare topics. Although the majority of your patients are probably not yet this tech-savvy, the online world is a vast and ever-expanding arena for targeting healthcare consumers.