

Online Reputation Management and Patient Acquisition Go Hand in Hand

Online
Reputation
Management
&
Patient
Acquisition



[Reputation management](#) has always been vital for healthcare professionals. Bedside manner, patient word of mouth, and reputation among your colleagues all factor into your medical practice's growth. Building the career, business, and practice you want has always meant building and maintaining a positive reputation.

It's no different in the Digital Age.

Your online reputation doesn't always go hand in hand with your real-life patients' perception, though. Offline, your reputation grows as a direct result of the care you provide to patients in

your office. Online, your reputation can take on a life of its own due to the [multitude of outlets patients now have to rate, review and discuss](#) the care you provide. That's why you need to reach out and take control of your online reputation, or it might end up controlling your practice.

Patients Don't Just Rely On Word-Of-Mouth Anymore

Patients talk. They always have, and they always will. If your patients love the medical care and the personal attention you provide, you can bet their friends and family are going to hear about it—and if they have a negative experience, they'll be [talking about that](#), too. These days, though, many of those conversations will happen on social media instead of in person, with [more than a third of people in the US](#) saying they already use social media to gather healthcare information.

Today's patients also go a whole lot further than simply asking their friends for doctor recommendations. Those recommendations are just starting points for the research patients do via search engines and [healthcare-oriented websites](#). Before they contact your office, they're likely to look for other reviews, to learn more about your background and your medical practice, and to see if your online profiles provide a sense of transparency and help build trust. An online reputation that helps build trust helps you acquire more patients, plain and simple.

It makes perfect sense, too, whether you're selecting a doctor, a restaurant, or an auto mechanic. Given the choice of three providers, all recommended by friends, would you choose the one with a shaky online reputation, the one with limited online presence, or the one with plenty of available information and outstanding reviews?

In fact, a study conducted by Michael Luca of [Harvard Business School](#) found that earning one extra star on Yelp led to a 5-9% revenue boost. For healthcare professionals, ensuring you have a strong profile with a positive rating not only on Yelp but on sites like Healthgrades and ZocDoc can be a major boost to your practice. Ensuring that your profiles and your reputation on these sites reflects how you want patients to view you and your medical practice is an essential part of modern patient acquisition.

Search Engines Like Highly-Rated Medical Offices, Too

The benefits of actively managing your online reputation don't end with direct patient acquisition. Not only are you more likely to compare favorably to other doctors with a strong online reputation, but you're more likely to be found in the first place.

Google and other search engines read the web just like patients. Well, not *just* like patients, but they use a set of algorithms to determine which doctor offices and specialists patients are most likely to engage with. Those algorithms examine the same things patients examine—how complete your online profiles are, your reviews and ratings, how many other reputable healthcare sites point back to your doctor's office website, and what people are saying about you online.

All of that information determines which medical practices, clinics, and hospitals are shown at the top of search results, and which are relegated to the search result pages no one ever sees (it depends on who you ask, but fewer than [10% of patients will ever go past the first page](#) of search results—that's the first *ten* results!). So managing your online reputation not only ensures you have a better chance of acquiring new patients when they look you up, it also means you have a better chance of patients learning about you when they don't have a referral.

Manage Your Reputation, Grow Your Practice

The choice is pretty clear. Take an active hand in managing your online reputation, and growing your practice will be a whole lot easier. Let your reputation management lag, and your waiting room will empty out while your revenue dwindles. We think healthy growth is the better option, don't you?



Garrett Smith is the founder of InboundMD, a digital marketing service for healthcare practices that allows them to acquire patients, protect the practice's professional reputation, and engage patients with social content campaigns without having to be a marketing expert. Garrett and the team and InboundMD have helped independent health practices, hospitals, and pharmaceutical companies across the US increase new patients, bolster their reputation, and establish themselves as leaders in their field using modern marketing methods. Follow him on Twitter @garrettsmith and @inboundmd.

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Manny Oliverrez, CPC, is a 20-year healthcare veteran and the CEO and co-founder of Capture Billing, a medical billing services company located outside of Washington, D.C. He teaches the nation's physicians, administrators, and medical practices how to maximize billing and revenue cycle management processes. Manny also frequently posts articles and videos on his [award-winning healthcare blog](#). For more information on Manny and his company, please visit [his website](#), or call (703)327-1800. And if you're on [LinkedIn](#), please look for him there too. **READ MORE**

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