

Standing out: 10 ways to differentiate your practice

Rob Berman November 2, 2015 (Edit)



Do you ever wonder why chiropractors seem to be located in clusters near one another? As the real estate motto suggests, certain areas become popular due to their location, location, location.

An important factor in setting up shop is the need to be close to where your patients live and work. Patients often choose a practitioner based on convenience and practice hours. But as the profession has expanded beyond solely offering manual adjustments, DCs are finding that in addition to picking a good locale, differentiating their practice offers another way to succeed. Here are 10 ideas for setting your practice apart:

1. Become a cash-based practice.

Chiropractic Economics 18th Annual Fees and Reimbursements Survey revealed that around 16 percent of chiropractic practices are cash-based. Fee-based reimbursements can be less reliable, and the future is shifting toward a changing system that will favor value-based reimbursements.

Many DCs have decided to rid themselves of insurance payers altogether and simply charge what the market will bear. One major upside to this is receiving payment right away and not having to wait for a reduced fee delivered months later.

2. Prioritize patient relationships.

Many patients are introduced to the chiropractic world because of neck or back pain resulting from an injury. They do business with your office during the limited period of their treatments. Then, they are gone until the next crisis, flare-up, or injury.

Michael Mathesie, DC, DACRB, in Coral Springs, Florida, stresses the relationship approach. He starts with a detailed patient consultation and examination. He wants new patients to feel that they received a more thorough evaluation than any other physician would take the time to provide.

During his functional examination of the patient's entire system, he explains his approach to chiropractic including one-on-one treatments, manipulation adjustments, instrument-assisted soft tissue mobilization, evidence-based laser therapy, and a rehabilitation program specific to the patient's functional deficits.

He notes that patients are sick of being rushed through visits at the doctor's office. When they find a doctor who takes the time to find the cause of their problems and fix them, they are willing to pay a reasonable fee.

Convert from a transaction-based to a relationship-based practice. Offer regular visits for a monthly fee, which allows for multiple touch points with your patients.

3. Focus on a single technique or piece of equipment.

Most DCs have core practice philosophies. Some of these might include specialized techniques such as Gonstead or Activator Method. Kinesiology taping has become popular over the past few years. And while traditional adjusting tables take up much of the market, you can stand out by having flexion distraction, spinal decompression, and inversion therapy tables.

In many cases, prospective patients are unaware of what these techniques and equipment options offer.

Communicate with them, and incorporate this education into your marketing efforts to expand your practice.

4. Add physical therapy.

Chiropractors know that patients sometimes require additional rehabilitative treatments such as physical therapy once they are adjusted. Both strengthening muscles and increasing range of motion are crucial to improving patient health, and physical therapy (PT) is a covered insurance modality. *Chiropractic Economics* 18th Annual Salary and Expense Survey reported that 56 percent of clinics provide PT and rehab services.

5. Offer wellness and weight loss.

Over the past 10 years, more chiropractic offices have branded themselves with the term "wellness." The word may join "chiropractic" or "chiropractor" in the business name—or even replace it. Again, DCs are expanding the size of the pie instead of competing for the same traditional fee-for-service patients.

Weight loss can serve as a powerful way to attract patients who could also benefit from traditional chiropractic. And the flip side of that is your chiropractic patients already trust you and your staff, so

many of them will be open to exploring weight loss with your oversight. This cross-referral setup can help you maximize your patient touch points, relationships, and revenues.

6. Invest in a laser center.

Many studies are exploring the positive benefits of laser therapy. Photons promote blood flow, oxygenation, and adenosine triphosphate (ATP) production. They also break down scar tissue and can remodel affected cells, resulting in powerful healing.

Many chiropractors have purchased lasers with specific wavelengths and power, and have taken educational classes to learn evidence-based protocols. The accelerated healing results from laser have increased referrals and expanded the number of conditions that these doctors can treat. Patients perceive lasers as high-tech, and they appreciate receiving treatment that has lasting effects.

7. Position yourself to treat the whole body.

Chiropractic colleges and continuing-education programs provide opportunities to learn and implement extremity adjusting. If potential patients are only looking to you to solve back and neck issues, then you are missing out on many new relationships.

8. Deliver at-home care with house calls.

Back in the day, general practitioners visited patients in their homes. That business model has the potential to regain momentum. You could transform your practice to offer only house calls, though most DCs offer them as an add-on for flexibility and to supplement office-based treatments.

9. Implement acupuncture and massage.

Chiropractic Economics 18th Annual Salary and Expense showed that 24 percent of practices offer acupuncture and 50 percent offer massage. These two services are additional access points for potential patients. The patient may commence their relationship with you by opting for one or both of these services. Then, you can provide education about chiropractic and broaden your treatment plan.

10. Accommodate walk-ins.

Patients have been trained to call for appointments. Their expectation is that they will have to wait to see you. What if you had walk-in hours when patients could be adjusted? Expand your reach by making it easier to access your services. Walk-in hours work well with the membership monthly fee model. Patients can come and go at their own convenience.

The combination approach

Jamie Leighow, DC, of Twin Hills Chiropractic Health Center in Muncy, Pennsylvania combines several of the offerings discussed above. His practice is distinct from others in the area with unique equipment and techniques, physical therapy services, wellness and weight loss, a laser center, and more. "We treat the whole person," Leighow says. "Their needs vary at different times in our relationship. We expand our services to meet the needs of our patients."

But if people aren't aware of how your practice is different, then they will not seek you out. They will go to the chiropractor down the block, or never step through a chiropractic office at all. As a business owner, you directly influence practice revenue through your marketing and communications. Here are some tips to get the word out about your offerings:

- Social media is here to Engage with it. Amp up your participation or get started today.

- Your website needs to tell your differentiated The content on your website is searchable and discoverable. Spend some time and money on search engine optimization (SEO). Make sure it is mobile friendly.
- Established tools like press releases still Use them traditionally as handouts in your office, send them to local news outlets, include them as part of new patient packets, and have a spot for them on your website.
- Update your brochures and flyers to include your points of Share these on social media and post them on your website.
- Blog, blog, Commit to a frequency you can handle, or hire a service to do the work for you.
- Content can be as simple as 250 words with a Think about introducing your flexion distraction table. How about a “name the table” contest?
- Ask vendors for marketing ideas and Lean on their marketing expertise to grow your practice.

You became a chiropractor to help heal people. Share your message and why your practice is special. You will help more patients and your bottom line at the same time.



Rob Berman is a partner at Berman Partners, LCC, a medical device sales, service, and marketing company. Berman Partners specializes in new and pre-owned therapeutic lasers. He helps doctors improve patient outcomes while increasing their income. He has held a variety of marketing roles during his career. He can be contacted at 860-707-4220 or rob@bermanpartners.com, or through bermanpartners.com.