

Blogging for Patients: A Physician's Guide to Blogging Basics

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Formerly thought to be the province of computer geeks, the blog has rapidly overtaken the website as an effective means for businesses to communicate and advertise their products and services to their clients and prospective customers. But what exactly is a blog and why should you, as a physician, consider incorporating one into your practice?

According to Wikipedia, the word "blog" is actually a *portmanteau*, or combination of two words: "web" and "log." It is distinct from a traditional website, which tends to be a more static assemblage of web pages and lacks easy use and altering by its owner-user. The strength of websites and web pages is in displaying products and services that don't necessarily change all that often and when they do, are usually modified by a web development company or in-house web specialist.

Most physicians, even those who operate smaller practice groups, do not have the necessity to employ an in-house web expert. This makes the blog the perfect solution for physicians for establishing an online presence.

The blog began as an alternative and unique means for individuals to communicate with their target audiences on the Internet using a journaling method. Often these were not business undertakings at all but just ways to convey a political or social viewpoint. But the blog has truly blossomed so that now it is an invaluable tool for entrepreneurs and businesspeople such as physicians to establish and build their brand, the end goal being to attract new patients into the practice.

Setting up a blog is relatively easy. I advise physicians that just as they hire an accountant to manage their bookkeeping, an attorney to oversee their legal issues and a financial advisor to manage their money, so should they engage the services of a blog consultant. It's my own experience that a blog is less expensive and can be up-and-running relatively quickly.

You will have to work closely with your consultant to determine the blog's theme (how it should display), and the major categories that describe the services the physician's practice offers. Most blogs, by the way, are set-up using software called WordPress, which is the gold standard for blogging software, yet is free or very low cost.

But where the blog shines – and why it has become the top means of self-promotion on the Internet – is in its powerful journaling features. Once your blog consultant has your blog running live and tutored you on how to write a "post" (publish an article), you are free to write and post as many articles as you want without having to engage the services of others to publish them for you.

As the owner-publisher of several highly-ranked blogs, here is the advice I offer for you to establish a strong brand and hopefully attract more patients into your practice:

Write as often as possible, definitely at least once a week or more for the first 6 months to a year.

Blog posts do not have to be very long; in fact, sometimes 2-4 paragraphs is all you want to write. Provide links to related professional articles and publications using strong keywords that are associated with your practice. Doing this causes search engines to find your blog, which will gradually improve its rankings on the Internet for your type of practice. The higher you are ranked, the more likely prospective patients will be able to find you. Links, by the way, are the Internet's version of footnotes.

Think of as many keywords as possible that are associated with your type of practice. Either have your blog consultant copy-and-paste them into your blog where the metadata go or show you how you can do this yourself, so you can modify those terms in the future. Use bold-face on all keywords, e.g., **plastic surgery**, again, to enhance search engine optimization.

There are several types of blog articles you can post:

- (1) you can abstract and comment on articles in scientific publications
- (2) you can write original articles and provide links (footnotes) to supporting articles in other publications
- (3) you can write a post about a new service or product your practice is offering or a special event that you are holding.

A final piece of advice I offer new bloggers is to firmly resist the siren telemarketing calls of businesses that offer you "search engine optimization," aka "SEO optimization." This is usually sold on a monthly fee and can be ridiculously expensive. If you just focus on your writing, do it regularly and remember to write content that includes key words (and that includes your name and that of your practice!), you will improve your rankings on your own and be well on your way to building or expanding your patient base.

Physician Opportunities From MedicalMatch.org

Cardiology - Anderson, SC – Local interventionalist seeks other cardiologists with similar strong work ethic. Adding associates to now-solo practice; ultimately will be five to seven. He is AnMed Health's top admitter and performs 30% of all cath. High volumes overall: 450 to 550 coronary interventions and 100 to 150 peripheral interventions annually; 50 to 60 nuclear studies and 60 to 70 echos per week. He is published and active in national and international research studies; is the principal investigator for approximately 90 % of current device and medication trials at AnMed Health. And believe it or not, his call is manageable. One office; supportive congenial staff that includes echo, nuclear and vascular technologists. Good payor mix. Superb opportunity for well-trained, energetic interventionalist with shared vision for building group. Must practice high-quality CV medicine. Good comp; first year salary, benefits. Buy in at 12 or 24 months; hard assets only. AnMed Health System - 597 beds. Recipient of 2008 HealthGrades awards in clinical excellence and patient safety. AnMed is number one in SC for cardiac surgery; overall pulmonary services and overall critical care. Anderson is located on 50,000-acre Lake Hartwell...yes, close enough for principal residence...and I-85 which can get you to either Charlotte or Atlanta in two hours. ...Charleston is only a morning's drive. To review this and other opportunities: Contact Sherry Chastain, Dir, Medical Staff Development, AnMed Health Medical Center, Anderson, SC, 800-226-3103, Sherry.chastain@anmedhealth.org

Cardiology - Dallas, TX – Outstanding Opportunity for an Interventional Cardiologist. HeartPlace is the past, present, and future of cardiology in North Texas. With HeartPlace, the future of cardiology is truly here. We are currently seeking an Interventional Cardiologist at our S. Fort Worth clinic location. The HeartPlace clinic currently has 1 physician (Non-Interventional) so physician must be comfortable being in a small clinic and being the only Interventionalist at the clinic. Call is 1:4 (1:2 for Interventional). Services offered at the clinic – nuclear (mobile camera), echo, stress echo, pacemaker checks. Hospital (Huguley Memorial Medical Center) has 2 cath labs. Clinic outreach 1 day/week is probability. Physician must have outgoing personality. For further information: Contact James Dooley, Cardiovascular Provider Resources, 14800 Landmark Boulevard, Suite 700, Dallas, TX 75254, 972-391-2053, rusty.dooley@heartplace.com

Dermatology - Indiana Opportunity – Exceptional opportunity to develop a practice in a thriving community with no other Dermatology services. High community demand and strong primary care referral base make this an outstanding opportunity. Choose the option of employed or income guarantee. Practice would include working with Regional Cancer Center involved in a national melanoma research initiative cutting edge technology. University affiliation; very competitive compensation and comprehensive benefits; located in a mid-sized community with an easy commute to a major metro. The area offers outstanding public and private schools, golfing, fishing, boating, theatre, symphony, music festivals, beautiful parks, college sporting events and much more. This is an excellent opportunity in a combined medical and cosmetic Dermatology practice. Equipment is state-of-the-art, including laser. Large patient base already established by Dermatologist who is retiring. Very competitive compensation and benefit package. Located in one of Indiana's larger cities, the area offers beautiful golf courses, boating, theatre, college sports, excellent schools and much more. For more information contact: Anna McNerney, 888-765-0007 (Toll Free), 574-262-0638 (Direct line), anna@mcphysicians.com

Emergency Medicine - Upstate New York – VISTA Physician Search and Consulting has a client seeking to add a BC/BE Emergency Medicine physician to its group. This is a permanent position. **Practice benefits** include: Extremely competitive compensation starting at \$215,000 with productivity bonuses; Flexible schedule including days, evenings, and nights; Three, 12-hour shifts per week to allow ample time off; No trauma work. **Faculty benefits** include: Cover two metro area hospitals with 24,000 and 42,000 emergency department annual volumes and one small facility with 13,000 in annual volumes; Double physician coverage days and evenings; double mid-level coverage afternoons and evenings at larger facilities; Admissions sent to admitting physicians; Nationally renowned Neurosurgery program and Stroke Center; Radiology on site; MRI, CT, ultrasound, and other testing services always available. **Community benefits** include: Close to Lake Erie and major Canadian cities; many