Public Speaking to Promote Your Medical Practice

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Public speaking can accomplish a number of goals: building a professional network, finding new patients, and giving back to the community.

Source: Physicians Practice

I would bet just the title of this post brings back uncomfortable images of public speaking: sweaty palms, red faces, and voice quivers. However, speaking engagements at live events, in front of potential patients, can be a wonderful way to attract new patients and grow your practice.

Typically there are a couple different kinds of speaking gigs, today I am referring to the types that build your network, build your authority, and/or give back to the community.

1. Where do I find these types of engagements?
In your next staff meeting, brainstorm what organizations, associations, gatherings, schools, or other events will have your target patient market. Once you have a list together, approach these organizations and offer your services; offer to speak on a topic that will interest their audiences. For example, one of my clients is a pediatrician; she does a monthly talk at the local library for moms during the toddler story time. During this talk she discusses topics such as healthy summer snacks, secondary drowning, sun care, and heat exhaustion. Her audience of moms has grown and her patient base is growing also. Remember when selecting events and organizations to partner with, it is vital to seek out your ideal patient market. It wouldn't do my pediatrician client any good to speak at a senior care center, right?

2. What if I can't find any engagements to speak at?
Create your own! Contact your local hospital and ask them if you can hold a learning hour or a free workshop for your ideal patients. Often times they will cover at least half the cost of advertising and promoting your event. Make sure that you have your topic and idea ready when you call. It also helps if you are reaching out to a hospital where you already have privileges.

3. What should I do other than talk?
Be smart about the time and effort you put in to create this new source of ideal patients:
• Gather e-mail addresses. Use a sign-in sheet requiring a minimum of a first name and e-mail address. You know you should stay in touch with patients, and now you are adding to that list.
• Have business cards and any promotional materials ready. I am not a fan of spending tons of marketing dollars on fancy brochures, personalized pens, or mini-calendars; in fact it is pretty unnecessary. Your best option is to have nice, professional business cards that direct your audience to your website and office phone number. Alternately, a simple post card can be printed up for about $200 (for 500 pieces) with key points to highlight or services offered.
• Consider giving something away. You may partner with a vendor to cross promote a program or service you offer — one lucky attendee may receive some sort of complimentary consultation, or it may be something as simple as a Starbucks gift card. One of my dermatologist clients gives away a free skin-care consultation at her talks.
• Bring along an office member who can schedule appointments on the spot. This last tip is 100 percent necessary, but it can also add a nice touch when wrapping up your presentation. After answering questions from the floor, say, "If you have any additional questions you can reach out to my office, or, Sarah is in the back and she is happy to schedule a time for you to ask personal questions." You don't have to use this verbatim, and many times my clients find they don't have to say it at all, because during the Q&A portion of the talk someone asks the questions for them. Once you get a few talks under your belt you will be an amazing speaker, and in the process you will be building your credibility, authority, giving back to your community, and building your practice in the process.

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