



Putting your Practice Online

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In our modern age, many patients expect to derive information about their physician or their practice from online sources. For many physicians, having a presence on the web provides patients with useful information about themselves and their office. Your website gives patients an opportunity to gather information about you that is accurate and up to date. Equally important, patients may refer to your website for office hours, practice preferences, and description of services offered by you or your staff. The sophistication of websites can be quite impressive. Websites can now be programmed to accept online appointments, accept payments for services, provide audiovisual presentations, or deliver medical care. Of course, features offered by your website is completely up to your needs, budget, and personal preferences. However, the mere presence on the web provides patients reassurance that you have kept up with modern technology.

Just as there are varieties of health care providers, there are numerous ways to create a website. You can spend hundreds of dollars for a website designing software, and then spend hundreds of hours learning the software, coding and implementing graphic design. And you are still left with the task of finding a company to host and maintain your website. Online companies like Yahoo or Register.com allow you to select a website design from a menu of templates. An online wizard can help you setup and arrange your website. A simple package with a plain website display can be obtained for as little as \$12.95 per month.

Sophisticated websites that are loaded with graphics and links can be quite expensive. Websites can now be constructed with features that allow patients to request prescriptions, and even communicate in real-time with their doctor. For a customized appearance, established website design companies such as www.websitesworldwide.com in Belmont, California, have the resources and ability to construct bullet-proof websites and update your website as technology changes. The results may be stunning. However, the tab for building a small-office website can range from \$5,000 to well over \$12,000. In this economy, that's a tough sell.

Touted as the “McDonald’s” of the website builders, www.websitesworldwide.com, have come up with customizable generic websites that are economical, readily navigable, and loaded with features that are found on websites that cost many thousands of dollars. But the decided advantage of their generic websites is the utility that gives a novice the ability to add, delete, and modify content on his website. Instead of buying at high prices, website users have the luxury of renting a website at low cost.

A description of generic rental websites is offered on www.genericmedsites.com. The cost of rental websites ranges from about \$20 to \$34 a month. Daniel Powers, M.D., a physician in Los Angeles, California, says that it took him less than thirty minutes to set up a generic website. “I like simplicity and I like control, but I didn’t have a large budget. The generic website from www.genericmedistes.com gave me everything I needed, plus more. I didn’t want to rely on a programmer every time I needed to change content on my website. Their user-friendly tools gave me the ability to easily modify my website anytime I needed to make a change.”

Office manager Anita Pastorino in Sacramento, California, says that her office website is indispensable. Not only does it free the staff from routine telephone calls inquiring about office hours or clinical services, but their generic website from Websites Worldwide has a link to www.DayClips.com, a popular online appointment scheduling system. When patients click the DayClips link, they are taken directly to the physician’s page on DayClips for online appointment scheduling. Pastorino explains, “At least 50 percent of our members use our online appointment system. Online appointment scheduling frees office staff to care for patients and perform other important tasks. Pastorino particularly enjoys easy access to modify her website. “It’s great to add or change our office website on the fly and without programming expertise,” said Pastorino.

As health care professionals become more involved with the internet, mandated electronic records, e-prescribing, and electronic communications, websites will inevitably become essential tools for medical practices. Ron Reynard, president of Websites Worldwide, has seen their generic websites skyrocket in popularity. Reynard observes, “Websites have become a valuable means of communication between health care providers and their patients. And implementing user-friendly generic websites has met the challenge of providing economy while satisfying the sophisticated needs of health care professionals.”