



Are You Appealing to the Decision-Makers?

By Christy Morrow

When it comes to spending healthcare dollars, women generally call the shots. A concerted effort to target women is now advised by practice consultants. Once you have attracted the female market, their male counterparts will follow. According to a Charlotte, NC based advertising agency survey, 75% of the time females between the ages of 25 and 54 were the ones who made the medical decisions in their households. Tapping into the female market is where doctors can gain access to other family members and friends, marketing experts say.

Based on a general preconception, most women are nurturers and men are in denial. You are much more likely to get a women in your office to deal with her husband's prostate cancer than you are to get a husband in to deal with his wife's ovarian cancer. But women bring more than men to the examining rooms, for they bring their children, friends, and parents, as they are often accountable for the health care for this ever-growing-older population.

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human services, one in eight people are older than 65. By 2030, that number will approach one in four. In the over 85 group, the majority are women. Marketing to women does not necessarily mean marketing their procedures, but building brand loyalty in women. Women look for the bedside manner in a physician where as men are often just looking for a quick fix to the problem. Generally, women are a tougher sell.

Interpersonal communications are an important factor when attracting the female market. It would be a mistake for a physician or a clinic to lose sight of this. Many women who have had extensive surgery or other health care issues did not choose the doctor because of their ad, it was a referral. If women are satisfied with a physician, word of mouth is the most powerful marketing tool there is. Expectant mothers, young mothers, and young families do a lot of talking. The most credible, cost-efficient way to get on a female's radar screen is word of mouth.

The physician is the ultimate reason women will frequent his or her office, but the office staff is just as important. It is the responsibility of the doctor to make sure that every level of his or her staff members reflect the tone that the doctor wishes to have represented. It makes a huge financial impact.

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Women today are doing a lot more Internet research, which sometimes means they're asking questions about products. They are asking for certain kinds of tests now that are revenue-generating for physicians. Make sure your nurses have the tools to help educate patients, including brochures. Also, educate your nurses so they have the knowledge to talk to patients. Invite feedback from these patients to see if you are answering their questions and they understand your responses.

Integrating effective marketing and customer service to key groups into your day-to-day operations can be one of the greatest keys to sustained growth. Statistics prove that physicians should target women when it comes to health care decisions for their family. Be proactive when doing this and it will help you not only attract and retain loyal patients, but also increase the volume of referred business from your current patient base.

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