



# Integrative Practitioner

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## How to effectively manage the online reputation of your integrative practice

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“Just Google It.” It’s a common strategy for consumers, whether choosing a place to eat, searching for someone to repair a leaking roof, or selecting a holistic care provider to treat chronic pain or digestive issues. As such, integrative practitioners need to manage their online reputations to effectively promote their services.

“Each day, the American Association of Naturopathic Physicians (AANP) receives direct requests from people looking for a licensed naturopathic physician (ND) and our online ‘Find a Doctor’ search tool gets the most page visits on our site,” said Taryn Ernest, communications director, AANP, in Washington, D.C. “This demonstrates that finding the right physician is in high demand, so it is wise for naturopathic physicians [and other integrative care practitioners] to have a healthy online presence in order for potential patients to find them easily and make sure they are the right fit for their health needs. Not having an online presence makes it difficult for today’s patient to find you.”

Vijay Patel, DC, CCSP, chiropractic physician and medical director at Advanced Physical Medicine & Therapy, in Mount Prospect, Illinois, is well aware of the need to proactively manage his practice’s online reputation to attract and keep patients.

“Many patients will go to their local Facebook group, or they will look on Yelp or look at Google reviews to choose a primary care provider or a chiropractor or a therapist,” Patel said. As a result, while many provider organizations focus on advertising, it’s more important for practitioners “to better manage their reviews, their social media, and their online content,” Patel advised.

Paying attention to this online presence pays off for Advanced Physical Medicine & Therapy, as the medical group typically pops up on the first page when prospective patients search for chiropractors in the area.

“The reason why we usually will fall on the first page is because we tend to our social media presence, we tend to our website, and our Google reviews,” Patel said.

Integrative practitioners not only need to make their presence known online, they also should provide prospective patients and clients with the information needed to make informed care decisions. As such, Ernest noted, integrative practitioners should provide information that answers a variety of questions such as:

- Can I trust this care provider with my health needs?
- Does this care provider focus on my specific condition, and will they be able to help me?
- Does this practice take my insurance? Do they have payment plans if not?
- Is this care provider accessible? Can I get to their practice easily? Do they offer telehealth appointments?
- What are others saying about this care provider? Do they have good reviews? Will they listen to me and take my concerns seriously?
- What are their credentials? Where did they get their education?

“Having this kind of information readily available on your website will make it easier for potential patients to take action and book that first appointment or consult,” Ernest pointed out.

## Looking your best

Providing information online is just the start. To maintain a favorable online reputation, integrative practitioners also should keep the following best practices in mind:

**Offer credible information.** “Always lead with data and integrity. Offer information online that educates. Make sure your recommendations are backed by research studies. Do your own investigation of studies and do not rely on someone else's reputation,” said Mimi Guarneri, MD, FACC, ABOIM, associate professor at University of California, San Diego, and founding president of Academy of Integrative Health & Medicine in La Jolla, California.

**Stay in your lane.** “It is best if you discuss what you know best. A naturopathic doctor should not claim to know the same as a hematologist or cardiologist. A cardiologist does not have the musculoskeletal knowledge of a chiropractor. Everyone should bring their expertise to the care of

the people they serve,” said Guarneri, who is board certified in cardiovascular disease, internal medicine, nuclear cardiology, and integrative holistic medicine.

**Show why you’re special.** “If you specialize in any particular modalities or conditions, be sure to talk about that on your website, social media, and in your online directory listings. The AANP ‘Find a Doctor’ search tool allows our members to list what conditions they treat and what modalities they use, which can significantly increase their new patient referrals,” Ernest said.

**Produce engaging, yet informative, content.** “More and more practitioners are advertising their practice and the services they offer by creating engaging videos and posting them to Instagram and/or TikTok, to name a couple of platforms. Rather than being outright advertisements for their practice, these videos tend to touch on facts about common ailments - think gut health, fertility, etc. - or specific medical concerns. These types of short videos tend to be more engaging because they are informative, quick to process, and can reach a wide market. Credible and trustworthy content with good visuals can be a powerful tool in creating an online presence,” Ernest said.

**Get up to speed in social media skills.** “Medical schools give practitioners knowledge and training on how to become a physician [but] they don’t tend to cover the ins and outs of owning their own practice or the best practices of social media and having an online presence. This is why belonging to their profession’s association can elevate their online presence. Many associations, offer webinars and professional development courses that teach the busy practitioner how to have and manage a successful online presence. For physicians who don’t want to take on another task, many associations also offer discounts on services like web design and content marketing,” Ernest said.

**Learn from your mistakes.** “We have meetings in our office before every single shift. During these meetings, we acknowledge all of our positive, five-star reviews, and thank our staff. If we ever have a negative review, we always talk about the things that we could have done differently to make sure that the event never happens again. We’ll sometimes spend 30 minutes on the issues and discuss communication or provide sensitivity training,” Patel said.

**Repost authoritative information.** Patel’s practice belongs to an array of professional associations such as the American Chiropractic Association, Illinois Chiropractic Society, American Chiropractic Neurology Board, and others – and frequently leverages content from these groups. “They have many informative posts that we can repost onto our website,” Patel said.

**Seek positive reviews.** Advanced Physical Medicine & Therapy provides clients with an exercise tracking app. To elicit positive feedback, the practice sends out a simple three question survey that asks users how the app is helping them to stick to their exercise program and if they have any feedback. By doing so, the practice is able to garner positive feedback that can be used to bolster its reputation online.

*John McCormack is a Riverside, Illinois-based freelance writer who routinely covers healthcare information technology, policy, and clinical care issues. While he often writes about complex topics,*

*he always looks to find the human stories that everyone – from healthcare executives to providers to patients – can easily relate to. McCormack’s work has appeared in a variety of healthcare consumer and business-to-business publications.*