

Guidelines for Effective Reputation Management

1. Maintain a complete profile for yourself on directory and review sites.

This is the first step, and arguably the most important. The key to successful management of your online visibility and reputation is to ensure that the information on you and your practice is accurate.

Review the initial Online Identity Check that PUMC has provided and “claim listings for the sites you haven’t already logged into and updated your information. The various sites require you to log in, provide a user ID and password. Once logged in upload photos, videos on some sites, make sure address and phone number are correct. Keep a master list of the log in/password information.

The benefit in having current and accurate information about a practice online cannot be understated, and Web-savvy patients will recognize the efforts to engage them online and listen to feedback. These sites should be periodically monitored for any new reviews in addition to any other review/directory sites that are noted during your online visibility check.

2. Implement an easy-to-use system for your patients to give their feedback to you or a designated person in your office and instructions on how to post on the respected rating sites and those that index well.

In Office System

Patients should be advised of your system to solicit their feedback and your office staff must be proactive in encouraging patients to give their feedback throughout their consultation process, surgery or procedure and after-care. Each and every patient should fill out a survey or have their comments about their care, treatment and outcome noted.

Steps as simple as sending your patients a follow-up email after a visit, giving them a card to take with them asking for feedback, and most importantly making sure you and your staff acknowledge any cues that might indicate a patient’s unhappiness. Any problems should be told to the doctor immediately and a corrective action plan put in place.

One of the best methods is to have them sign a release to post their comments on your website.

Review Sites

We have found that having a list of sites with positive reviews, backed with testimonials, on your website to be one of the most effective methods for you to maintain control of your online reputation. This strategy will turn around a potential patient that brings a negative review to your attention.



Please note that care should be exercised not to pressure your patients, but encourage them to share their experiences with you first and then if they seem interested on review sites you recommend such as, Google+, Healthgrades, WebMD, Vitals, etc.

3. Ongoing open communication process to discourage negative review postings and what to do.

One very effective and simple way to discourage negative comments on a third party review site is to have an open and active email address and personally engage the person as mentioned above. You won't completely eliminate unhappy patients or those looking to grind an ax, but by sending a simple email to a patient after an appointment, making a brief follow-up call goes a long way towards addressing the patient's concerns and making sure that they are heard.

The dissatisfied frequently make a bigger show of their feelings, but they are substantially outnumbered in most cases as in your online identity reputation check. A lack of positive ratings is, more often than not, not a sign of a displeased patient base but of only a few unhappy patients. Reputation management experts advise physicians NOT to engage the person online. If the person has posted clearly fraudulent and libelous information, you are advised to contact your attorney to address the situation directly with the patient. .

4. Be vigilant of your reputation online.

By keeping abreast of issues that are commonly brought up when your office is mentioned, you have an opportunity to make relatively simple and effective changes that will nip the problem in the bud. It has been our experience that the "biggest" problems many patients have include the factors that some review sites ask patients to complete. Areas such as wait time, ease of scheduling appointment, communication and overall satisfaction. Since review sites tend to value the most recent ratings as most relevant, physicians who address things in a timely fashion give themselves maximum benefit. Sometimes acknowledging the problem early on goes a long way to assuaging fears that the office is somehow hopelessly mismanaged. Again, patients appreciate the attentiveness and engagement.

