

PARKER PRACTICE TIPS

What we learned that made a difference

ATTRACTING AND RETAINING PATIENTS

Dr. Janette A Kurban '99

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Keep copies of *Chicken Soup for the Chiropractic Soul* in your reception or front waiting area. Autograph with a personal message at the “Why I am a Doctor of Chiropractic” page and give a copy to all new patients and all current patients caught reading it. I even have patients ask if they can buy an autographed copy for friends and family members who don’t know me or chiropractic!! The book is such a wonderful way to educate the public with real-life chiropractic stories from patients.

WOW!! What an honor to share chiropractic wellness with strangers! I am blessed.

To order copies of *Chicken Soup for the Chiropractic Soul* visit www.parkershare.com

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You finally graduate, get your clinic set up and actually manage to get your doors open... now what? You must get new patients! This is a real problem for many new and experienced doctors and was a problem for me as well when I first started my clinic. Where do you find new patients? How do you get them in your office? What ways work and what ways are a real waste of time? Please read on to see what my personal experience has taught me and what other successful doctors has shown me.

First off, where do you find new patients? They are literally everywhere! One thing you cannot afford to be as a new doctor is shy. The first patient I ever had come into my office I met in line at Wal-Mart. I was there to get my son’s pictures developed and noticed that the person in front of me was getting pictures of a car accident developed. Most people would think to themselves ‘I sure wish I could help them’, but I actually tapped her on the shoulder and asked ‘Have you recently been in an accident?’ The funniest thing happened in the next few minutes – she wasn’t upset at me, but rather extremely pleased that I wanted to help her. The next day she came to visit me for the first time and brought her father in who was in the car with her. Three weeks later she referred another couple to me. My point is this, many new doctors are so afraid of rejection that they will literally fail and go out of business because they didn’t want to face it.

Rejection is very scary, yet we have to face it someday. If you want to find your sole mate, do you really think that person will fall from the sky? No, you have to get up, ask that person out, and face the fact that you might get turned down. The only certainty in the situation is if you never ask the answer will ALWAYS be “No!” During school, there was a guy in my class who always seemed to have a date. I asked him once “What is your

secret man? You ALWAYS have a date.” He said a very interesting thing to me “If you ask enough people out, you will get a yes.” If you speak to enough people about chiropractic, you will get new patients!

How do you get new patients into your office? There’s several ways (we just covered one of them). First of all, I always have a business card on me. This is especially important if you aren’t in the phone book. DO NOT do the sleazy sales person tactic of handing them two cards – it didn’t work on you at the car dealership, it won’t work with new patients.

You must be confident that you can help. People have radar for weakness and if you are even a little unsure of yourself they pick it up fast. If you were going in for major brain surgery and your surgeon said “Well, your problem looks like something I might be able to help. I will certainly give it my best. Also, the surgery might take anywhere between 1 to 10 hours. Are you ready to get started?” would you stay for the surgery? Heck no, you’d run out of there fast. Then why do we as chiropractors think that this sounds any better saying ‘I might be able to help you with those headaches. It might take 15 visits or so but we’ll just have to see. I can’t promise that I can help you but I’ll give it my best. Does that sound like something you would be interested in?’ BE CONFIDANT in your abilities to help people.

Frankly, advertisements rarely pay off for anyone we’ve spoken to. Yellow pages are expensive and typically the patients you receive from them are mediocre at best. A local clinic here in Oklahoma ran a full page (over \$60,000/year) for 4 years and it never once paid for itself. TV and radio are about as good as yellow pages. If you aren’t willing to dump a ton of money into it, it just won’t work. The best ways we’ve ever gotten patients are free or next to free. We’ve done free screenings at Wal-Mart, health food stores, retail stores, gyms, etc. It’s been a great source for new patients, and since you speak to them face to face, you already have some report with those you spoke to.

We’ve done several types of screenings. The easiest and least expensive are the blood pressure screening and posture screening. During the blood pressure screening bring a blood pressure cuff / stethoscope and some one page health evaluations [HINT: Make your forms with check boxes or Yes/No responses so it won’t take the person long to fill out]. Have the patient fill out the screening (get name/address/phone on screening form) and take their blood pressure. Copy down their blood pressure results onto the back of a business card and give it to them. File their health questionnaire in a folder and call the person back later that week. Do not try to relate chiropractic to blood pressure. I know that an adjustment affects the sympathetic nervous system thereby reducing blood pressure, but let’s be serious – they aren’t likely to believe you in the first place and secondly they are even less likely to go to a chiropractor for blood pressure treatments. If you do a posture screening, you can do it very easily by just bringing to identical scales to the screening (you can also add another element of the posture pictures or strings, but we don’t). Have a person step on the scales, look straight ahead and then copy down the weights. This can actually be explained chiropractically at the time if you wish, or just have them fill out the same health questionnaire and follow up with them. Again, write down their results on the back of a business card so they’ll have it with them.

A more expensive screening is the Myovision/Sub Station screening. These are highly effective, but typically the machines cost several thousand dollars to get. There’s also the cost of the laptop to run them and a projector/speakers if you really want to take it all the way. Our clinic borrowed a Myovision unit for the Oklahoma State Fair this last September. We received 40 new patients following the 10 day fair! It was an excellent screening for us, but a lot of our time was spent explaining the technology and not chiropractic. You need to learn to keep your explanations simple and concise. You would be shocked at how little people know about what you do as a chiropractor. If you talk “medical” to them, they feel dumb and degraded and have no desire to come see you. Also, you must be ready to answer people’s questions. You wouldn’t believe how many “out there” questions people will ask that you then need to relate to chiropractic. Not to mention, you’ll get the occasional medical professional who will really ask some detailed questions about the tests you are performing.

Another way to attract new patients is to give talks or lectures. Now, before you even think it, public speaking is not the end of the world. Start with something small like an in-clinic lecture. Talk about something you know a lot about and like...for instance - chiropractic! I just gave an in-clinic lecture on chiropractic and had 4 new patients from it. It was about 40 minutes long with a 20 minute Q&A at the end. I served \$6 large pizzas and drinks (a lot of people requested bottled water). It was easy, fun, and informative. Not only did I get new patients – I armed my current patients with knowledge to talk to new patients for me.