

# NEWS CAPSULE

## PRACTICE BUILDERS...

### *24/7 Communications Solutions for Your Medical Practice*



Your diagnostic skills and care are outstanding. You'd like to see your practice grow. What are you doing to stay in touch with patients, prospective patients and other physicians, and become more visible in the community?

How can you develop these important communications while you are seeing patients, making hospital calls, staying in touch with referring physicians, attending meetings, enhancing your medical education? You are dedicated to your patients and your practice; you can't be rainmaking all the time.

Effective communications, however, is a vehicle that extends your reach—bringing your message to your patients and their families, to prospects, to the referral physicians who are interested in your practice, to hospitals, to the community, to varied media, developing and enhancing your relationships around the clock. Building this rapport takes time but it is worth the effort. Multiplying your outreach, connecting with those audiences, this is where effective public relations works for you, and it is on duty 24/7. While you are doing what you are trained for, public relations extends your outreach and grows your practice.

What makes your practice stand out? How are you serving patients? What is newsworthy? What's new or different? What are some of the ways you can offer helpful information? How can you reach patients and prospects? How do you keep referral physicians informed? Seventy-five percent of articles, news and photos you read and see in your newspapers come by way of public relations, increasing recognition and good will. People gravitate to medical practices they know and regard.

Why should the media want to know about you, your practice and your practice-related activities? Answer: Because they know that their readers and listeners - your patients, prospects and the public - are interested in their own and their families' health and well-being. Your community, for example, has newspapers and magazines that are interested in you because you live and/or practice there.

What is newsworthy? Valid news can include: new treatments, new people, state-of-the-art equipment, expanded facilities, accreditation, community service, awards.

*Item:* You've received additional professional accreditation. Notify the county medical association so your fellow professionals can see it in the *News Capsule*. The media would also welcome a press release about this.

*Item:* You have expanded your facilities. Get a press release out to the media.

*Item:* A well-done "open house" will promote good will and awareness.

*Item:* Your adoption of new procedures and state-of-the-art technology are areas that the public are vitally interested in. Send a press release.

*Item:* Your participation in community events such as health fairs helps to disseminate information and forge community connections.

Publicity works when it is considered relevant, new, explanatory. Unlike advertising, which is purchased from the media, public relations is constantly appraised for its news and information value. When considered a good audience *fit* by the media, your message gets published and/or broadcast - *at no cost!*

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The possibilities in healthcare communications are endless. For example, they can include newsletters, website development and enhancement, brochures, your logo and graphics, and participation in community activities such as the annual heart and cancer walks. Radio and television both accept public service announcements. There may be possibilities for guest broadcast appearances.

How visible are you? How visible is your practice? Healthcare public relations is a cost-effective way of explaining your specialty and your practice to patients and their families, prospective patients and referring physicians, thereby growing your practice. Reaching out enhances trust; visibility creates interest. In an age of increasing healthcare complexity, keeping patients informed and staying in touch helps develop an effective bridge between physicians and patients. The value of public relations is that you stay visible, deliver your message, generate new patient leads, enhance the reputation of your medical practice and build relationships. Public relations provides you these dividends 24/7 and gives you and your healthcare team the time to do what you do best: take care of your patients.

*The author is president of Geller, Grace & Associates, a health-care public relations firm, and a board member of Public Relations Society of America, Fairfield/Westchester Chapter. Ms. Geller received the Business Marketing Association's Star Award for Excellence in Marketing Communications. She can be reached at (203) 329-0386 or PGellerGrace@att.net.*