

Empower Consumers by Sharing Your Expertise

Many consumers are not aware that a physical therapist can help them regain strength, become active again after years of living a sedentary lifestyle or avoid costly surgery. To combat low consumer awareness, the American Physical Therapy Association has stepped up their efforts to promote the many benefits physical therapy provides. A number of physical therapists have followed their lead by utilizing new communication tools to educate consumers.

Sure, you're used to educating patients during office visits and providing patients with handouts that clearly explain exercises and treatment procedures. But you may not have considered or have been afraid to try some of the new communication tools available to you to enhance your consumer education efforts. Here's a few creative approaches you can use to promote the benefits of physical therapy:

“Online communication tools make it easier to share information with consumers.”

1. **Website** - A website is an essential communication tool for any physical therapy clinic. It's a great way to offer information about your staff, clinic hours and highlight your specific physical therapy niche. Websites are also an ideal way to educate the general public about the benefits of physical therapy. You can post relevant articles on ways to avoid injury, provide informative fact sheets and offer advice on how to make the most of their physical therapy appointments. If you don't have time to write your own articles, consider linking your website to relevant information on other websites.
2. **Blog** - A blog is another way to help educate the public about the benefits of physical therapy. Unlike websites, blogs are easy to set-up and post information to. They are the ideal medium for showcasing your clinic's unique personality. Blogs are a great way to provide answers to some of the questions that come up during office visits. Share tips to help individuals avoid common injuries. Or simply offer suggestions on ways individuals can live a healthier lifestyle.
3. **Radio Show or Podcasts** - Most physical therapists never dream of being on the radio, let alone hosting their own weekly radio show. Karen Litzy, PT, and host of a weekly internet radio show is no exception. A few years ago she would have never imagined

“The internet has made it easier to educate consumers about the benefits of physical therapy.”

having her own show. But after being a guest on a friend’s radio show, she found that she enjoyed being on the “air.” She decided to give her own show a try. Her internet radio show, Healthy, Wealthy & Smart, features a different healthcare expert each week and covers a variety of health care issues. A weekly radio show or podcast is a great way to educate consumers on the go since they can download and listen on their way to work or while working out.

4. **Videos** – Getting patients to do exercises correctly is one of the challenges most physical therapist face. A patient handout with illustrations or pictures showing exercises is better than just a verbal explanation, but a video is even better. It used to be too costly to provide patients with a video showing them proper exercise techniques. Thanks to technology and the internet, videos can be shot and uploaded to sites like YouTube for consumers to view instantly. Providing consumers with a visual of the proper way to complete an exercise is one of the best ways to improve patient compliance. Once a video is created you can show it to patients while they are at your clinic and encourage them to access the video while at home. If you don’t have time to shoot your own video, research videos currently available online and link to those from your website.
5. **Social Media** – Social media provides you with a unique opportunity to communicate direct with your patients. Encourage patients to follow your clinic on Facebook or Twitter and use these mediums to offer quick tips to help consumers avoid injury, learn ways to get back in shape or highlight your physical therapy services.

Taking the time to educate consumers provides additional benefits beyond helping consumers live healthier lifestyles. Your consumer education efforts can also help your clinic become recognized as a trusted expert, improve patient compliance and enhance patient understanding.

Learn more about hosting your own radio show by listening to a podcast with Karen Litzy, PT, at PTTalker.com.



About the Author

After helping design and market the first preventative knee brace for football players as an Athletic Trainer at Iowa State University in the late 1970's, Jeff has made physical therapy equipment his passion since 1986. He launched Advantage Medical in 1994 with a commitment to help Physical Therapists and rehab professionals improve clinical outcomes as well as save time and costs through pioneering, creative solutions. Jeff's entrepreneurial approach keeps Advantage Medical and its clients at the forefront of innovations and best practices in the PT industry.

Jeff was also one of four original founders of the National Medical Alliance in 1988 which later changed its name to Motion1. He served as the Chief Operating Officer for 10 years and was instrumental in its growth and reputation as a leading supplier to independent rehabilitation distributors across the country. He is also the host of the long running podcast "PT Talker" featuring a physical therapy expert for listeners every week. Subscribe to the free, informative broadcast designed to help therapists grow their business at www.PTTalker.com

About Advantage Medical

Advantage Medical was established in 1994 to meet the growing needs of rehab professionals in a variety of medical disciplines. Advantage Medical has become a leading provider of expert advice as well as quality therapy equipment and supplies, offering innovative solutions to challenges faced by physical therapists, clinic directors, chiropractors, athlete trainers and other medical professionals.

In October of 2010, Advantage Medical joined the family of Scrip Companies of Bolingbrook, IL as an operating division. Now with access to a wider variety of products and large scale purchasing power, Advantage Medical is poised to raise the level of value we bring to our clients. Scrip Companies serves markets in massage therapy, chiropractic, spa and now physical therapy.

About PT Talker

Stay up-to-date on the latest industry trends and news by connecting with a community of your fellow experts. Advantage Medical's PT Talker is the online resource for business news and ideas for physical therapists. Our podcasts, blog and newsletters keep you informed with new ways to help grow your business, save time, provide improved clinical outcomes or lower costs. Review updates on the newest equipment and products, find tips and techniques for improved patient outcomes, and hear from other clinics about their best business practices. You'll find everything you need to stay ahead of the curve in physical therapy at PTTalker.com.