Marketing Your Physicians to Prospective Patients:

Making the Most of Online Biographies to Improve Patient Outcomes

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Asst. Professor: UW-Eau Claire – Integrated Strategic Communication

www.evanperrault.com
New Patients = New Normal

• With implementation of Affordable Care Act:
  – Newly insured patients will be seeking care for the first time
  – Previously insured patients may no longer be able to see their current doctors

• Combine this with ongoing patient turnover:
  – Patients move
    • ≈12 million people move to new county/state each year
  – Doctors move / retire
    • Latest surveys conducted 22-39% reported having to choose a new family medicine physician in last 12 months
Put Yourself in Your Patients’ Shoes

• Choosing a new doctor is not a simple choice:
  – Want to find someone with whom you’d be comfortable communicating deeply personal information
    • Communication apprehension with physicians is larger than you think
      – Latest survey: 28% of sample (n=320) had high CA.
  – Someone with whom you’d like to continue seeing
    • i.e., maintain continuity of care
“Consumers are no longer passive patients,...wielding new tools and better information to comparison shop. The year ahead will be marked by how well the industry responds to this shift.”

PwC – Health Research Institute
Top Health Industry Issues of 2014
## Future Patients are Doing Their Research

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<thead>
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What Do Patients Want?

• Top 5:
  – 1. How doctor communicates during consultations
  – 2. Board certification
  – 3. Philosophy of care
  – 4. What doctor’s staff (e.g., nurses, office personnel) are like
  – 5. Waiting time to get an appointment
# Patient-Physician Selection

## UnityPoint Health Trinity

**In the Quad Cities**

84 physicians pop-up within a 30 mile radius

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provider Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Jennifer R. Aanestad, M.D.</td>
<td>UnityPoint Clinic - Family Medicine - Dexter Court</td>
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<tr>
<td>Candyce L Ackland, M.D.</td>
<td>Great River Medical Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Himabindu (Bindu) Alla, M.D.</td>
<td>UnityPoint Clinic - Family Medicine - Moline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mikka M Appel, M.D.</td>
<td>John Deere Medical Group - Bettendorf</td>
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<tr>
<td>Daniel J Arnold, D.O.</td>
<td>UnityPoint Clinic - Trinity Family Practice Clinic</td>
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Patient-Physician Selection

Daniel J Arnold, D.O.

Specialty
Family Medicine

Phone
563-742-4850

Fax
563-742-4855

UnityPoint Clinic - Trinity Family Practice Clinic
4480 Utica Ridge Rd
Suite 160
Bettendorf, Iowa 52722

Clinic Hours
Mon: 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM
Tues: 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM
Wed: 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM
Thur: 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM
Fri: 8:30 AM - 12:00 PM

College/Medical School
University of Osteopathic Medicine,
Des Moines

Board Certification(s):
Family Practice

Accepts Children
Yes

New Patients Welcomed
This clinic is accepting new patients. Please call 563-742-4850 to schedule an appointment today.
Lack of “good” info is the Norm

- Perrault & Smreker (2013)
  - Content analysis of 1,400 bios from 150 systems in US
- Majority had professional information:
  - Address (93.6%)
  - Medical School (80.8%)
  - Board certification (71.4%)
- Lacking other important information patients want to know
  - Philosophy of Care (7.7%)
  - Personal info (8.3%) – hobbies, marital status, children, religion, where from/born
Why Personal Info May Be Important

• Who are our friends? Why do we confide in them?
  – We “know” them
  – They are similar to us on many different dimensions

• Norm of reciprocity
  – You share information with others when they share information with you
    • I tell you a secret – you feel comfortable telling me a secret

• What if doctors “shared” a little personal info?
Experimental Manipulations

Peter A. Smith (M.D.)
Specialty: Family Medicine
Medical School: UCLA Medical School
Board Certification: Family Medicine
Residency: Intermountain Medical Center

Peter B. Smith (M.D.)
Specialty: Family Medicine
Medical School: UCLA Medical School (1996)
Board Certification: Family Medicine
Residency: Intermountain Medical Center (1999)

Med-Bio: I am a member of both the American Medical Association (AMA) and the Michigan Academy of Family Physicians, and board certified by the American Board of Family Medicine. I serve on the local hospital’s board of medical ethics, and also as a guest editor for the Journal of Family Practice. My specialty is in treating primary care problems facing entire families.
Initial Study Findings

• Biography with **personal information:**
  – Highest levels of liking and similarity
  – Greatest levels of uncertainty reduction
    • E.g., “I feel like I know who this doctor is”
  – Highest levels of anticipated patient satisfaction
  – Greatest reductions in communication apprehension
    • E.g., “I would feel comfortable communicating with this physician”
  – 89% of participants chose this physician to want to visit
Anticipated Patient Satisfaction

![Graph showing the relationship between Patient Satisfaction with Physician and Biography Type. The graph includes lines for Low CA, Moderate CA, and High CA, with data points indicating increasing satisfaction from Limited to Professional to Personal biography types.]
Communication Apprehension

[Graph showing the relationship between communication apprehension and biography type]

- Low CA
- Moderate CA
- High CA

CA Level for Each Doctor

Biography Type

Limited
Professional
Personal

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Why Comm. App. Matters

• Communication is the main ingredient in medical care.
  – Not being comfortable informing the doctor of past history or problems could lead to ineffective treatment
    • $6.8 billion spent each year on unnecessary tests and treatments originating from primary care offices

• Low CA related to positives for healthcare systems
  – Patients have higher satisfaction with encounters and with the medical care in-general
  – These patients return...possibly refer friends \rightarrow increased profits for health systems
  – Apprehensive patients may now actually seek-out care when they would not have previously
Could Videos Also Help?

• Some healthcare systems in the region are already doing this

• But:
  – Are they worth the added time and cost to produce?
  – What should they look like?
  – What kind of information should be included?
Physician Videos Vary Widely

• Perrault (2014)
  – Content analyzed more than 150 family physician videos from 20 healthcare systems in the US
  – Coded for the presence/absence of 50 different pieces of information

• Positives
  – Philosophy of care (80%)
  – A piece of personal information (48%)

• Areas for improvement
  – Only 31% showed doctor’s office
  – 25% showed b-roll of doctor interacting with patient
What Patients Want to Know… matches well with medium of video

- How doctor communicates
  - Dr. actually is speaking and…
  - Could include footage of Dr. interacting with a patient

- What staff are like
  - Could include b-roll of office staff

- Appearance of doctor’s office
  - Could include b-roll of the doctor’s office

Source: Perrault (in-press)
Videos must be short

• 72% indicated the ideal window for a video biography is between 60-90 seconds

Source: Perrault (in-press)
Do Videos Have Meaningful Effects?

• Provided 320 participants:
  – Either a text or video biography
  – Bio including either professional or personal info

• Lengths of biographies held constant

• Personal information again produced more positive outcomes than solely professional info:
  – Higher anticipated satisfaction
  – Greater quality of care
  – Higher perceptions of similarity
Do Videos Have Meaningful Effects?

• **Video** also more effective than text alone
  – Greater:
    • Perceived similarity
    • Uncertainty reduction
    • Quality of care
    • Anticipated satisfaction
Effect on Communication Apprehension?

Professional vs. Personal Biographies

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initial CA</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Info Bio</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Info Bio</td>
<td>3.5</td>
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Text vs. Video Biographies

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Which Doctor Chosen?

• 78% chose the doctor most similar to them
• When given a choice of both a professional and personal bio:
  – 65.5% chose doctor who provided personal information
• When provided both a text and video bio:
  – 67% chose doctor who provided video
What were the deciding factors?

- Open-ended comments from participants were coded:
  - Personality characteristics (30%)
    - “she seemed friendlier”
    - “you get a sense of the doctor’s personality and demeanor”
  - Those who saw a video said it was helpful (26%):
    - “The video helped to feel like you ‘met’ the doctor before going to the practice”
    - “You can’t get a feel for a doctor just from a picture, but listening to them speak is helpful”
  - Relatable (19%) and similar to patient (16%)
    - “I can relate better to her” “she seems more like me”
Why Your Biographies Matter

• Biographies you provide are powerful decision-making tools
  – Information is completely controlled by you unlike the other information sources patients reference

• Can help limit doctor shopping
  – Patients with poor physician relationships are three times more likely to switch doctors
  – Main reason for poor relationships → communication
    • Improved bios can SHOW how a doctor communicates before stepping in office
    • Patients can see if this would be someone they’d want to visit and keep visiting
Why Your Biographies Matter

- Help those who wouldn’t seek care because of apprehension, or uncertainty, initiate an encounter before their problems get worse
  - Allows for patients to more easily find a doctor they feel they could connect with
    - E.g., overweight patient may not seek preventive care because worried about doctor lecturing them. Improved bios could help them find a doctor more like themselves.
Three Key Takeaways to Improve Bios

• 1. Increase the amount of personal information provided about the physician
  – Helps us find the doctor most similar to us
• 2. A philosophy of care is important to include
  – Only 8% of bios nationwide have these
• 3. Short videos help provide even greater benefits
  – Patients can actually hear/see how a doctor communicates
Work Still to Do…

• Currently, I am the only researcher in the nation determining how biographies impact patient selection
  – There are still many questions left to answer
    • E.g., do people want the same info regarding specialists?
• The videos I produced were no-frills (just doctor in front of a white wall) and they had significant power to change attitudes / behaviors
  – What if b-roll is added?
    • This takes added time and resources – is the ROI worth it?
Evidence-Based Communication Solutions, LLC
Strategic Communication Consulting

When was the last time you diagnosed your communication efforts?

Let us help you measure your organization's current communication effectiveness, and design ways to get the greatest return on your investment.

Expertise:
- Strategic Healthcare Communication
- Target Audience Research
- Campaign Design & Evaluation

About Us

We offer three key services to organizations and healthcare systems:

Improving Patients' Physician Selection Processes

Target Audience Research:
E.g., Surveys/Focus Groups

Strategic Campaign Design & Evaluation
Questions?

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References


