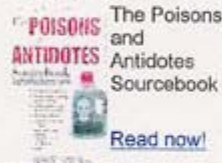


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Doctors are Increasing Their Public Relations Activities

SPIN DOCTORS: WHY PHYSICIANS ARE CHOOSING PUBLIC RELATIONS AS / MEANS OF PRACTICE PROMOTION

Years ago it was taboo for respectable doctors to advertise their practice in newspapers, magazines, radio, or television. One need only to open the yellow pages in any city see the plethora of medical advertising that exists today. Plastic surgery ads are abundant, replete with voluptuous women on the beach or Pepsodent perfect smile advertise dental practices. In the past, the medical community frowned on doctors trumpeting their skills. Today, The American Medical Association has no rules again with the exception of guidelines that ban anything misleading. As elective medicine become more competitive, physicians in major cities are now struggling to gain an edge over the competition.

Many savvy physicians have now discovered that traditional advertising translates to "biased" in the mind of the consumer. Although advertising may maintain the status of a medical practice, it does not usually take a physician to that coveted level of "stardom" and recognition within his or her sub-specialty. Shrewd physicians know public relations offers a subtle alternative to advertising. **KMR Communications, Inc** medical public relations firm in Manhattan. **Katherine M. Rothman, the company's president and CEO has generated significant coverage for her firm's clients in high competitive markets.** A successful public relations campaign can often make the difference between a practice remaining a best-kept secret, or making a physician synonymous with his or her sub-specialty.

In this age where media rules, people often choose their plastic surgeons, dermatologists, and dentists via the media. When a magazine such as Allure or Vogue features a particular doctor in a positive story, the thought in the mind of the consumer "if Vogue chose to cover, Dr. X, he must be the best in his field." **As Katherine Roth explains,** "most people do not know that doctors engage public relations firms. When they see a doctor quoted in a consumer publication or on television, this holds a tremendous amount of weight. For this reason, many doctors demand that the relationship between publicist and client remain strictly confidential. The doctor who engaged a pr firm would like the public and his/her colleagues to feel that a media appearance was based strictly on accomplishment rather than an intermediary such publicist.

Up until the late 1980's, a doctor could be guaranteed a thriving practice provided he had good training, skill, and compassion. Today, medicine has evolved into a busier especially in the elective realm. A successful practice is sometimes more reflective good promotion than good medicine.

As Katherine Rothman explains, "many doctors use public relations to shift the nature of their practice. For example, some plastic surgeons will seek the help of our firm to increase their number of cosmetic cases." Reporters are more apt to rely on physicians who have established a solid track record of delivering last minute credible quotes.

Medicine today often crosses the line and there exists a blurring of the sub-specialties. Dermatologists perform liposuction, ophthalmologists offer cosmetic eye procedure gynecologists often bill themselves as cosmetic surgeons. Board certified plastic surgeons will often engage a pr firm to educate the public as to who is qualified to perform cosmetic procedures. This serves to keep the patient population in the office of true plastic surgeons and away from other sub-specialties who may offer cut rates to attract patients.

As Katherine Rothman explains, public relations firms bear a responsibility when the information they are disseminating via their clientele can affect people's health or medical choices. "Our firm does it best to engage physicians who are ethical and have good reputations. It is not our goal to take an unscrupulous physician and make him or her a "star." When public relations is implemented effectively it can truly make a difference in the long-term success of a medical practice.

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