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The Impact of
Urological Disorders
on Home Care

Zero in on Urological Disorders and Grow Your Reach

By Merrily Orsini



One of the most successful ways to use a home care company Web site is to educate on a variety of issues that relate to needing assistance with activities of daily living. This includes obvious needs like dressing and bathing, but also some necessities a bit more uncomfortable to discuss, like incontinence. The truth is large populations of Americans suffer from incontinence. In fact, the National Association for Continence estimates that urinary incontinence affects 200 million people worldwide. More than 300,000 Americans undergo hemodialysis treatments to compensate for a loss of kidney function. This figure alone should alert you that people who have to deal with this issue personally, and those who are partners, spouses, caregivers, or family of those who have to deal with this issue, need some assistance. Match this with the statistics that prove the Internet is rapidly becoming the first choice for researching for information, and you have a targeted audience.

How could you ignore this powerful statistic when evaluating target audiences for your home care agency's marketing efforts? There's a good chance many in your direct geographic service area are struggling with this issue. Providing helpful information will definitely hit home with current and prospective clients and

their families, and will help to educate about home care as an option while at the same time promoting your services. Use your agency Web site as a marketing and educational tool that works to your advantage. Follow these suggestions and zero in on an entirely new potential client base and up-sell services to your existing clients. Make sure to try and educate readers with your marketing materials rather than simply advertise your services. Readers are likely looking for tangible information they can use immediately, and providing knowledgeable information will help to establish your agency as an expert on incontinence care. In turn, this status will go far when families you have reached do need outside help. They will naturally turn to someone they are familiar with who can provide effective solutions: your agency.

Create Online Vendor Partnerships

The first step towards promoting your services related to urinary disorders is to seek out mutually beneficial partnerships. Consider this a marketing version of, "I'll scratch your back if you scratch mine." Take the services that are most utilized by those who use home care and seek out a partnership with a local vendors. The entire medical team is another partnership opportunity: urologists,

clinics, or physician practice groups that offer home dialysis. Present a mutually beneficial exchange of marketing muscle by offering to list their services on your Web site if they offer to promote your in-home services on their site. Also offer to publish their information in your email or newsletter marketing communications. If there are specific products used intensively by those getting care at home that have incontinence and/or urinary problems, crosslink with them.

Offer Online Resources

The next step towards showcasing your expertise in care for those with urological disorders is to beef up your online resource center.

Write a tip sheet for common urinary disorder care, such as incontinence or dialysis. Perhaps discuss the five different types of home dialysis or other issues like home modifications, space needs, training time, and what sort of commitments family caregivers need to make. Offer an assessment guide to help families decide which type of care they need.

List suppliers of equipment and Web sites that offer support or information related to urinary disorders. Design it in a format that can be printed directly from your Web site (place a print button next to your list of resources) and encourage

users to hang it on their refrigerator. On the list of resources, make sure to include product descriptions and photos, and most importantly, describe how each device or technology improves the client outcome. Make sure to link to this page from different areas throughout the site, such as the home page, service page, news, etc.

Don't forget your home page. If you post great information or are directing traffic to your Web site, remember the first page visitors typically see is the home page. Make it obvious for your visitors to locate information. Post a title, graphic, and links to your resource lists or articles about urinary disorders.

Build Your Client Base

Get a real pulse on the interest level for urinary disorder home care by sending out a direct mail piece advertising a free in-home assessment with free incontinence products if they contact your

agency within one week. Be sure to request email addresses so you can continue to market to these valuable leads.

Follow Up with Email and Newsletter Contact

As I always recommend, make sure to create an email and newsletter campaign based around the topic of focus (in this case, urological disorders). Use the already created information in your resource lists, articles, and vendor partnerships and place them as teasers in an email and/or newsletter format. Make sure to have link-throughs to your Web site as well as all the partners' Web sites. Have all the vendors' Web sites carry a graphic banner or ad that showcases this information on their site and links back to you, and to the specific page with the relevant information.

You are already an expert on caring for those with urinary disorders, and by taking a few easy steps, you can re-

lay this information to potential clients and referral sources. By conducting an online marketing outreach program, you will be implementing cost-effective and interactive marketing tools to up-sell to existing clients and connect with new leads through a specifically targeted issue which affects so many potential clients. Start your Web-based outreach program this month and continue to use this model for different service areas. You'll discover how zeroing in on specific issues that educate and inform can drive more traffic to your Web site, produce many new clients, and also gain some new referral sources.

About the Author: *Merrily Orsini, MSSW, is Managing Director of corecubed, an integrated marketing communications company that specializes in home care and home health industries. Merrily has been active in internet marketing since 1990. She is an 18-year veteran of the private duty industry and currently serves on the Advisory Board of the Private Duty Homecare Association of America. She was recently elected to the NAHC Board of Directors.*