Healthgrades: where prospective patients go to find a new dental care provider

When consumers fire up their web browsers, the vast majority of them start at a search engine. According to research from Pew Internet, 93 percent of online activities begin with a search. Health is a popular topic: 72 percent of Internet users looked online for health information within the last year.

As you may expect, Google dominates searches with a market share of about 65 percent. However, health-care-specific search portals are growing in popularity as tools for helping prospective patients find a new dental care provider in their local area. Today, the No. 1 source for new patients searching and scheduling appointments with health-care providers in the United States is Healthgrades.

Healthgrades: a popular way to search for an orthodontist

Healthgrades is a leading online resource for consumers seeking comprehensive health-care information. Each year, more than 253 million visitors use Healthgrades.com to search, evaluate and connect with health-care providers that best meet their treatment needs. Healthgrades.com visitors represent the ideal demographic for orthodontists — they are overwhelmingly female (72 percent), highly educated (84 percent have some post-secondary education) and affluent (52 percent have annual household incomes greater than $75,000).

Healthgrades offers orthodontic practitioners a large, highly focused audience of prospective patients. Interestingly, the third most searched category on the site is for dental service providers.

During the past 12 months, Healthgrades tracked more than 20 million searches for dental care providers. Most importantly, Healthgrades users don’t just search — they schedule appointments. More than half (54 percent) of Healthgrades visitors will schedule an appointment. Among those who schedule, 95 percent make an appointment within the first week they search, and 38 percent schedule the same day.

Healthgrades visitors can be considered an ideal target audience for growth-minded dental care providers. So what should your practice do to harness this traffic and fill your schedule?

Optimize visibility and new patient conversion with a Healthgrades enhanced profile

Healthgrades offers a basic profile that practitioners can “claim” for free. It includes limited information about your practice, such as name and address. However, it also includes third-party ads and competitive practice advertisements. Most critically, it does not provide visitors with a way to schedule an appointment with your practice. Healthgrades visitors can submit a review of your practice, but they are not verified as your patients. While a basic profile is better than no profile, the ability to gain top ranking or convert visitors into patients is severely limited.

Healthgrades has established a partnership with Sesame Communications and, as of October 2013, orthodontists will be able to secure an enhanced profile, which will offer several strategic advantages over a standard profile and will give your practice better access and exposure to prospective patients seeking a new orthodontist, according to the companies. A Healthgrades Enhanced Profile from Sesame Communications provides practices with:

• Priority placement in searches: A Healthgrades enhanced profile gives your practice higher placement and greater visibility to patients searching for an orthodontist in your area. It provides premium positioning in its “featured listing” section at the top of the page as well as organic searches. On average, a visitor to Healthgrades.com will visit 1.9 profiles during the visit, so it is imperative your practice be featured at the top of the search results.

• Click-to-request appointments: Enhanced profiles allow patients to request an appointment with your practice by simply clicking a button on your Healthgrades profile. This quick, automated process removes a potential barrier for patients looking to make an appointment.

• Complete, practice-branded profile: Enhanced profiles offer comprehensive doctor and practice branding, including full bio, address, procedures, location directions and detailed contact information.

Healthgrades research shows that visitors to a complete enhanced profile will spend four times longer on your profile, which, again, will drive new patient conversions.

While you can claim a basic profile at www.healthgrades.com, today Healthgrades enhanced profiles are only available from Sesame Communications. To get more information on Healthgrades’ enhanced profiles, visit www.sesamecommunications.com/healthgrades.

References available upon request from the publisher.