

# Creating and Optimizing ObGyn Practice Web Sites

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**Depending on the needs of your target market, a Web site may be essential for effective patient service and marketing.**

In order to develop a Web site that meets your practice's requirements, consider patient needs, marketing strategy, effective textual content, and ease of navigation. This article will focus on concepts for creating a successful ObGyn practice Web site, not the technical aspects of designing it.

## DESIGN

The graphic design of the Web site should be geared towards women. Web sites can unintentionally be very masculine in design, graphics, and color. Make your site appealing to women by including softer, more inviting colors. The site should look welcoming and friendly—be sure to avoid obvious, heavy marketing.

Any site's navigation is important. Be sure everything is easy to find. Since people think differently, effective Web sites build repetition into the navigation system, so there are multiple ways to access content. Consider including a search function and a site map. Keep in mind that users should be able to simply access information without encountering a mess of technical problems.

Look at the Web sites of competitors and other ObGyns for ideas about what works and what does not. If possible, plan your future needs so that adding other options later on will not require a major overhaul.

## CONTENT

The text in your Web site is a reflection of your practice in the minds of viewers.

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Remember your audience: a woman wants to know if an ObGyn practice will meet her needs, and it is likely she will carefully read the content to determine if your practice is a good fit. As such, avoid being "cold" and leaving out essential elements appealing to women. Just as with graphic design, the text should be warm and inviting. Hiring a professional writer can provide a helpful third-party perspective for communicating your practice's unique qualities.

Similar to developing design, it is also important to outline the content on your Web site. You may wish to include an overview of your practice, patient education materials, and patient registration information.

## Practice Overview

Most patients appreciate the opportunity to learn more about a practice. Fill this space with a patient service philosophy, a mission statement, and information about doctors and staff.

Additionally, include a section that addresses basic information about the practice's operations. Items that patients may find useful include appointment hours, contact information, payment policies, medical records, and insurance information. Consider allowing patients to contact the office via e-mail. Be sure to list the communities you serve—you may want to register names of cities as keywords for search engine purposes.

## Productive Interaction

A Web site can save your practice money by reducing work that would otherwise be necessary for staff to handle, including various

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requests and standard questions. Your site could include:

- Customized log-in
- Patient registration information, including address, e-mail, health history, and insurance and demographic information
- Health forms:
  - Authorization for release of medical information
  - Notice of Privacy (HIPPA)
  - Arbitration agreement
  - Billing policy
  - Patient information update
- Appointment requests
- Prescription refills requests

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- Online bill-pay
- Directions to the office

If you choose to include these options, be sure to also implement the necessary security protocols to protect private information. It may be cheaper and more effective to hire a third-party company who can provide security for on-line communications. If you choose to have the patient "pre-register" online, be sure internal office protocols are in place to readily access the information at the time of the appointment.

### Patient Education

One of the most appreciated sections of your Web site could be a patient education center. Some ideas include basic information on:

- General pregnancy
- Complications in pregnancy and delivery
- Breastfeeding
- Obstetric/Gynecologic visits
- Menopause
- Cervical cancer screening
- Breast self-examination techniques

Current and prospective patients can be directed to this information, and may ask further questions during appointments. Not only is this useful to your patients, it is also an effective way to reduce appointment times. You may also want to add a link to *The Female Patient* Web site, [www.femalepatient.com](http://www.femalepatient.com), as there is an entire library of Patient Education

materials available. As a general rule, if you include the majority of the items above, your Web site can be an effective and useful tool for patients and staff.

### Optional Accessories

Other items that can be added to your Web site include:

- Virtual office tour
- Medical news and updates
- Baby pages (pictures of a patient's newborn, on a secured basis)
- Job openings
- Referrals to other specialists
- Blogs, podcasts, and Webinars

As with other Internet marketing methods, the key to selecting additional material is evaluating how it may serve the needs of your target market in conjunction with your available services.

### SEARCH ENGINES

Ranking high on a search engine listing may be important to your practice. Consider search engine optimization efforts to maintain a high ranking on major search engines used by your target market. Ask your Web site designer for ideas on how to accomplish this effectively.

### HIRE A PROFESSIONAL

Hire a professional Web site designer specializing in medical Web sites. Confirm whether funding for your Web site's development can be partially offset by sponsorship with a local hospital.

Maintenance of your Web site should be of paramount importance. This includes keeping hyperlinks, text, and all accessible forms updated. If you develop a function that requires maintenance, your Webmaster must track it regularly.

### CONCLUSION

A Web site is a reflection of your practice. Prospective patients may have no other means of evaluating a practice, so a well-designed, written, and maintained Web site can yield many benefits. Take the time, money, and effort to build a Web site that serves your practice well.

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