

ACG's Web-based Newsletter Benefits Patients and Physicians



Patient feedback is positive for ACG's Digestive Health SmartBrief

No one has made better use of ACG's patient newsletter, *Digestive Health SmartBrief*, than the Midwest Gastroenterology Center of Lee's Summit, Missouri. We asked Midwest's Marc K. Taormina, MD, FACG, to share some of his experiences in offering the e-mail newsletter to patients.

Why are you offering the newsletter to your patients? Today's patients are internet savvy. Knowing their physician is up to date with breaking medical developments in their specialty is important to them. I want to offer them a physician recommended web-based newsletter as a source of reputable information on GI and liver disorders. I have patients who come to my office with reams of information from websites that are not reputable.

How have you been so successful at having patients sign up? I involve my entire office and hospital personnel in the process of completing the sign-up sheets. It starts at the time when patient packets are mailed out with the sign-up sheets and flyers, as well as reinforcing this when they arrive in the office. Flyers are in my waiting room for families and friends of patients and they are sent home with the procedure information packets from both my ASC and the hospital GI labs.

How do patients react when they hear about it? Patients are generally glad to hear about a recommended website that offers them new and cutting edge information on their condition, as long as they are internet savvy and use the computer regularly.

My older patients may not be "wired" and really aren't interested.

Have you had any feedback from patients? The feedback I hear is positive, especially from my patients I see often, such as inflammatory bowel disease, celiac disease and IBS patients. Information on new treatments, etc., is often included in the newsletter and it brings up discussions in the exam room.

How has offering the newsletter helped your practice? My practice has benefitted from the newsletter because it offers a value-added service to my patients. They are getting a national society endorsed update on GI issues from their own doctor. It also gives patients confidence that their physician is connected to national issues, practice guidelines, and is aware of what is going on in his/her specialty.

What should your colleagues know about the patient newsletter? Physicians should know it is easy to incorporate the newsletter by engaging their staff in the process. In my case, it has led to new patient referrals from other patients, and as an aside, has led me to offer email communications to our patients, making the "wired" practice a marketing tool for today's busy working families and offering another avenue of communication.

Congratulations to Dr. Taormina and the other providers of the Midwest Gastroenterology Center! ACG

ACG members can sign up to offer the newsletter to their patients from the Members area of ACG's website, www.acg.gi.org/physicians/practice.asp. Look for the web banner for the Digestive Health SmartBrief.

Members who have already registered can let their patients know they are offering the newsletter by using the free resources available at www.smartbrief.com/gastro.