



COOPERATIVE OF
AMERICAN PHYSICIANS

How to Build and Manage a **Sterling Online Reputation**

A Quick Action Guide to Ensure
a Strong Digital Presence for
Your Medical Practice



Be an Online Superstar!

Yelp



4.5 Stars - 17 Reviews

“Dr. Z. is my favorite doctor! He has treated my entire extended family for over 20 years. He is extremely thorough and takes his time to ensure you are well taken care of. His staff is professional as well. They make sure referrals and refills are processed quickly. Dr. Z. always returns phone calls and I appreciate his dedication to his patients.”

Healthgrades



4.4 Stars – 7 Ratings

“Awesome doctor and great support staff.”

Vitals



4.4 Stars – 108 Ratings

“I have had many doctors during my lifetime and Dr. Z. has been the most hands-on doctor that I have had. Dr. Z. actually calls you with pertinent information whereas other doctor’s offices would have their nurses contact you instead. I am very fortunate to have found Dr. Z.”

WebMD



4.5 Stars – 112 Reviews

“Dr. Z. has never failed to correctly diagnose an issue, provided just the right treatment, and I was better in no time. Dr. Z. takes the time to explain things and genuinely tries to improve the health of patients.”

Table Of Contents

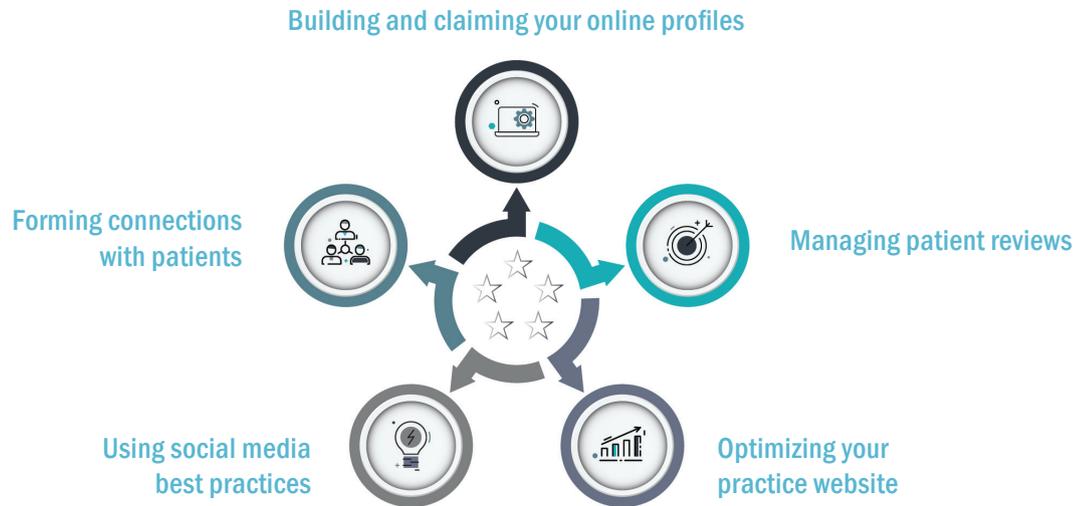
2	Introduction
3	What Exactly Is an Online Reputation?
6	Building Your Online Profile First Things First – Self-Assess Optimize Your Online Listings
11	Managing Your Online Reviews Ask Patients to Sing Your Praises Monitor and Respond to Patient Feedback Attain the Right Type of Reviews Make Staff Training a High Priority
17	Go Beyond Reviews Your Practice Website Get Social Showcase Your Expertise
21	Your Online Reputation Management Checklist
23	Acknowledgments
24	Additional PatientPop Resources
25	About CAP

Introduction

Patients of all ages are savvier than ever, many spending hours online researching physicians before scheduling care for themselves or a loved one. Gone are the days when physicians could rely on word-of-mouth referrals to build their patient roster.

And the numbers prove it. According to Software Advice,¹ “71% of patients use online reviews as the first step to finding a new doctor, while 43% would go out of network to see a provider with good reviews.” And with 7 in 10 Americans on social media,² it’s essential to have a strong online presence among your demographic’s most popular channels.

In this guide, you’ll learn about the core elements of creating an online presence and ways to strengthen your reputation. Consider this guide a 101 to online reputation management. Some of the topics covered include:



Plus, we’ve included a handy checklist to help ensure you have all bases covered!

Now, let’s get started!

¹Software Advice
How Patients Use Online Reviews, <https://www.softwareadvice.com/resources/how-patients-use-online-reviews/>

²Pew Research Center
Social Media Fact Sheet, <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/fact-sheet/social-media/>

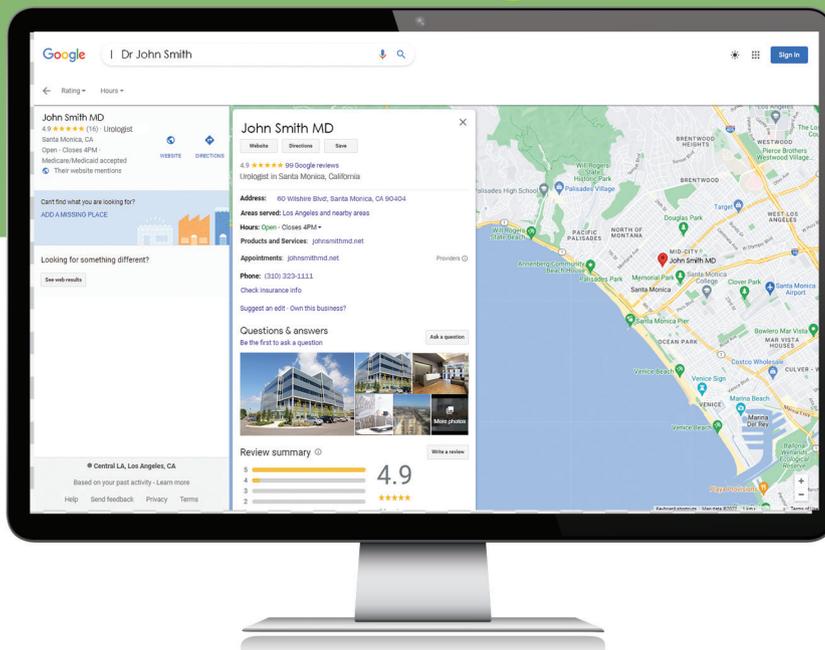
What Exactly Is an Online Reputation?



Just Google your name and a plethora of information will pop up about you and your practice.

This collective data makes up your online reputation and plays a crucial role in how you're being perceived by patients and peers, and the decisions they make as it relates to your practice.

Just Google It!





An Overview of Your Online Presence

Online Review
Websites

Your Practice
Website

Social Media
Channels

Business
Listings

Healthcare Profile
Websites

Some of the information published about your practice may be accurate and favorable, while some may not. Taking control of your online reputation is a surefire way to tell your story for the most optimal online image.

Building Your Online Profile



First Things First—Self-Assess

The value of a good online reputation cannot be underestimated. This is especially true for a physician.

When you type your name and/or your practice's name in any search engine, pay attention to the results.

- What's being said (or not said) about you on online review sites?
- Is there inconsistent or incorrect information about your practice on these sites?
- Can public-facing social posts offend—or even mortify—a patient?
- What is the state of your practice website ... or worse, a lack of a practice website?

Once you've had a chance to assess your results, ask yourself, "As a patient looking for a new provider, would I pick up the phone to schedule an appointment with my practice?" If your answer is "probably not," you've got some work to do.

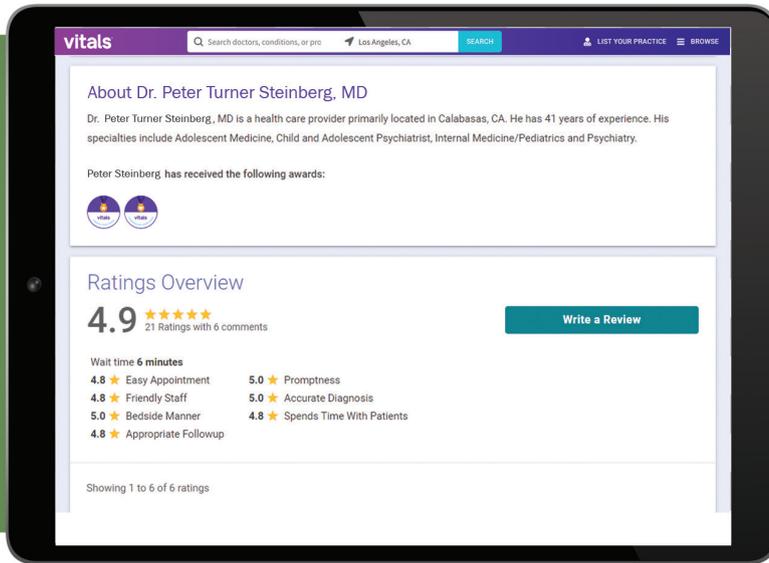


Pro Tip! Spending as little as **10 minutes** a week cultivating your online presence and addressing feedback publicly reduces the impact of negative reviews by up to **70%**.³

³Software Advice

How Patients Use Online Reviews, <https://www.softwareadvice.com/resources/how-patients-use-online-reviews/>

Optimize Your Online Listings



Even if you didn't initially set up a profile on any of the popular review sites, there's a good chance someone did it for you. The first time a patient posts a review about you, a profile is automatically created.

Regardless of how your profiles were generated, you want to ensure they are accurate, consistent, and robust across all major platforms. If your time is limited, start with these top five review sites:



There are many more, but focusing on these popular sites is time well spent.



Pro Tip! Make it a top priority to sign up for a Business Profile on Google. With 87% of market share,⁴ Google, by far, holds the title for largest online search engine. It's also the most influential site for online reviews since Google ratings reflect an aggregate of all major review sites. In fact, verified businesses on Google are twice as likely to be considered reputable.⁵ Additionally, when a search is done in Google Maps for a medical practice, the Google profile and associated reviews are automatically featured.

⁴Statcounter

Search Engine Market Share in United States Of America - October 2022

<https://gs.statcounter.com/search-engine-market-share/all/united-states-of-america>

⁵Google

Welcome to a Business Profile on Google, <https://support.google.com/business/answer/6300665?hl=en>

Here are some tips to help you get the most out of your online profiles:

Claim Your Name. By letting these platforms know that you're the provider or the owner of a business, you'll have the authority to optimize your profiles with your branding and provide accurate and up-to-date information.

Ensure Accuracy. Carefully review the sites to ensure that the information listed is correct and consistent.

When reviewing practice information, always check:



Name, address,
phone number



Description of
your practice



Proper category selection
(be as specific as possible!)



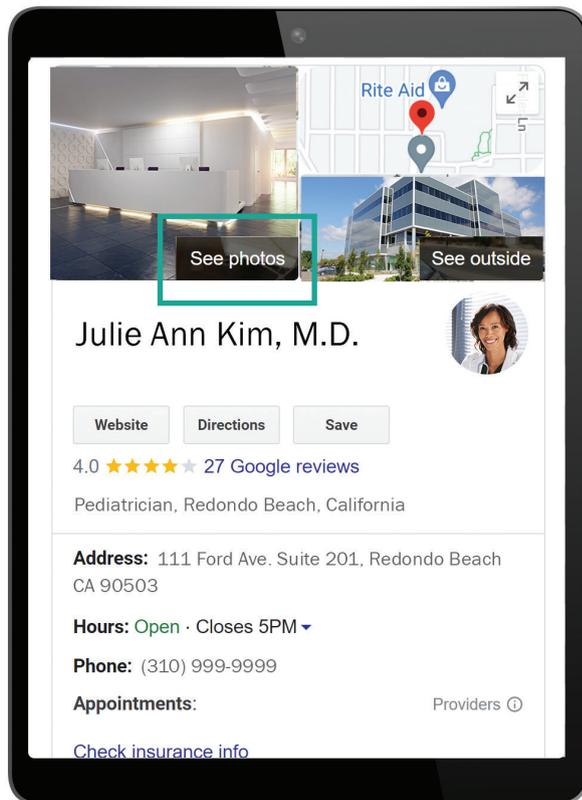
Practice website address



Business hours

Add Photos. The more the better. High-quality images of your building's exterior help prospective patients locate your practice, while photos of friendly staff in clean surroundings help personalize what may otherwise come across as sterile and uninviting. To minimize risk, only upload photos of your staff or of patients with their explicit written consent.

Set Yourself Apart. Highlight information in your profile that convinces patients why they should select you over competing practices. For example: years of experience, fellowship training, clinical interests, languages spoken, specialty or subspecialty, or convenient hours of operation.



Managing Your Online Reviews



Ask Patients to Sing Your Praises

Most patients are happy to write an online review sharing the positive experience they had with you and/or your staff. In fact, patients who are asked for feedback are more than twice as likely to post a public online review!⁶

But you have to ask. To avoid that potentially awkward conversation, send an email immediately after the appointment, letting the patient know that you want to know how their experience at your practice was and how you can serve them better. Remind them that patient feedback helps providers give better care.

BY THE NUMBERS⁶



85% of people say they trust online reviews as much as personal recommendations

When a practice responds to negative feedback,



81% of patients are satisfied



3 out of 4 people have searched online to find a doctor



RISK MANAGEMENT ALERT

Never offer money in exchange for reviews. It's unethical, against the rules on many sites, and a good way to lose your patients' trust.

⁶PatientPop

4 Ways Patient Feedback Can Help Improve Your Healthcare Practice

<https://www.patientpop.com/blog/4-ways-patient-feedback-improve-healthcare-practice/>

Monitor and Respond to Patient Feedback

Managing reviews is one of the most important steps you can take to build a favorable online reputation. The following tips will help shed the best light on you, while mitigating risks when responding to reviews:

- **Respond Quickly.** Ideally within 24 hours.
- **But Never Respond Impulsively.** Take time to consider the comment and decide if it's even worthy of a response.
- **Show Empathy.** Try to see the situation from the patient's point of view and use the feedback process as an opportunity to connect and comfort. Let them know they're being heard.
- **Remain Professional.** Keep your responses on point and always thank the patient, regardless of the nature of the review.
- **Be Discreet.** Offer to move the conversation to a private and secure place, like your personal email.



Pro Tip! For a more comprehensive list, read the “Responding to Negative Online Comments” at www.CAPphysicians.com/Respond

Attain the Right Type of Reviews

Three major components of online reviews can make or break a patient's decision to pick up the phone and schedule an appointment. When it comes to online reviews, both quantity and quality matter.

Three Components of Online Reviews⁷



Average star rating: Google's star rating is an aggregate of all major review sites and uses a four-star threshold when people include the word "best" in a query, so aim for a four-star rating.

Required:

Minimum rating of **4**.

Recommended:

Rating of **4.2** or greater.



Total number of reviews: You need more than ten reviews to influence Google's algorithm—but don't sacrifice quality for quantity. Use a feedback collecting system that allows patients to give detailed testimonials.

Required:

Minimum of **10** reviews.

Recommended:

40 or more reviews.



Frequency of reviews: Search engines equate reviews to customers served—so the more often your practice is reviewed, the more it's frequented and thus remains relevant.

Required:

1-2 reviews per month.

Recommended:

1-2 reviews per week.

⁷PatientPop Webinar

5 Steps to Successfully Managing Your Online Reputation

https://www.pathlms.com/capphysicians/courses/39849/video_presentations/225333

While you want to achieve all three review goals, it's important to remember that not all criteria holds the same weight in a patient's mind.

BY THE NUMBERS⁸



of patients won't consider a healthcare provider with an average star rating under 4.0



1 in 5 only consider providers that have a minimum 4.5 stars



of consumers consider recency a key factor when looking at business reviews. The quality and recency of these become more important as your target demographic skews younger

Not surprisingly, nearly half of all patients cite being most influenced by the average star rating, so it's critical you and your staff always strive to provide exceptional care and service.

⁸PatientPop
4 Steps to Improve your Google Reviews Star Rating
<https://www.patientpop.com/blog/4-steps-to-improve-your-google-reviews-star-rating/>

Make Staff Training a High Priority

Not only can a negative experience with staff trigger a one-star review from a patient, but it can also lead to a variety of other issues that may ultimately negatively impact your patient relationship and care.

Be sure you have a plan in place to train all staff on patient care best practices, including phone etiquette, front desk conversations, nurse interactions, and follow-up protocols, as soon as possible. A friendly, professional demeanor by staff (and physicians too!) goes a long way in fostering an outstanding patient experience.

Did you know that a combined

48%

of patients say they value the friendliness of the medical staff and the ease of scheduling appointments over other information when reading online reviews?⁹



⁹StatusLabs
*Reputation Management for Doctors – 26 Essential
Tips for 2021*
[https://statuslabs.com/online-reputation-
management-doctors/](https://statuslabs.com/online-reputation-management-doctors/)

Go Beyond Reviews

To really build a comprehensive online presence, there are additional platforms to leverage beyond online review sites. Here, we address those that should get your immediate attention.



Your Practice Website

If you don't have a website, this may damage your online ... and offline ... reputation because patients can't locate you in the mix of others. Further, some people believe if a business is not online, it is not legitimate.

Consider your website as online real estate and take advantage of having a digital space to showcase your expertise and practice.

Advantages of a Practice Website

- **Credibility** A professional website boosts your credibility, especially if you feature positive patient reviews.
- **Engagement** Practice websites engage and inform prospective patients, enticing them to schedule an appointment.
- **Improved SEO (Search Engine Optimization)** Post useful articles and other content on your practice website. Google finds the most relevant and high-quality web pages and ranks them higher on its results list when patients search for particular topics online.



Pro Tip! When reviewing your website, ask yourself the following questions:

Is it mobile-friendly?

>50%

of web traffic comes from smartphones.¹⁰

Does it load quickly?

53%

of visitors are likely to abandon a page that takes longer than three seconds to load.¹¹

Is your content optimized?

Alt tags, meta descriptions, and title tags

are the short title and content descriptions displayed in search results, and they matter a lot.

¹⁰Google <https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/marketing-strategies/app-and-mobile/mobile-web-traffic-statistics/>

¹¹Google <https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/consumer-insights/consumer-trends/mobile-site-load-time-statistics/>

Get Social

Patients often use social media to connect with their favorite doctors and share their experiences.

Platforms like Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube give you direct access to your audience for little to no budget.

Social Media Tips for Your Professional Profiles:

- Be professional and do not post about politics, religion, or any other sensitive topics.
- Keep your personal profiles private and restricted so that only friends and family can see them.
- Apply the same marketing principles as your practice website to enhance SEO.
- Post relevant articles and content and be sure to engage with patients who share comments and reviews.

Social media is also the ideal vehicle to position yourself as a healthcare thought leader and educate patients and the public on relevant topics.



RISK MANAGEMENT ALERT

Ensure that whoever manages your business accounts is appropriately trained in HIPAA compliance to eliminate the risk of accidental PHI leaks. And always make sure that photos shared on social media are free of any PHI (check the background!).



Showcase Your Expertise

Be sure to post any written articles to your social media profiles and website and share them with patients and colleagues via email if possible. The more places you share, the better likelihood of reaching others outside your usual network.

When you create informational content and share an article published on a specialty-specific topic, you promote yourself as a go-to expert and indirectly market your practice.

Keywords Are Key

Keywords are what your prospective patients are searching for online.

Determine what words your target patients would use in their search online to find you and be sure to sprinkle them into your content.



Checklist

Claim your business listings on the top five

- Google
- WebMD
- Yelp
- Healthgrades
- Facebook

Optimize your online listings

- Add photos of practice and staff (no patients!)
- Update information
- Get as specific as possible with your specialty
- Set yourself apart (i.e., years of experience, fellowship training, clinical interests, languages spoken, etc.)

Manage your reviews

- Ask for reviews
- Respectfully respond to negative reviews (without disclosing any PHI, respond quickly, be clear and to the point, and offer to move the conversation to a private and secure place.)

Optimize your website

- Create a blog to position yourself as a subject matter expert
- Sprinkle in relevant keywords

Get social

- Implement a social media policy
- Facebook
- Twitter
- LinkedIn
- Instagram
- YouTube

Showcase your expertise

- Draft content on specialty-specific topics
- Post articles on your website and social media accounts
- Add keywords to target your prospective patients
- Share content via email

Online reputation management can be time consuming, but the benefits are priceless to your practice. Delivering a modern, digital patient experience was once a competitive advantage for forward-thinking practices. Now, it's a business imperative for all. With a growing number of care options and settings, patients are playing the role of consumer—and they're becoming more selective. Managing a positive digital presence using the tools and guidance provided in this guide will ensure the solid foundation critical to your practice's strong reputation.



Acknowledgments

The Cooperative of American Physicians (CAP) would like to thank PatientPop for co-developing this resource guide.

PatientPop, a Tebra company, is the leader in practice growth with the only all-in-one solution that empowers healthcare providers to improve every digital touchpoint of the patient journey. As experts in the healthcare technology space, PatientPop makes it easy for providers to thrive in the consumerization of healthcare and promote their practice online, attract patients, and retain them for life.

CAP is pleased to have PatientPop as a participant in the CAPAdvantage program, a suite of no-cost or discounted practice management programs exclusive to CAP members. CAP members receive a significant discount on PatientPop's HIPAA-compliant practice growth platform to help you attract patients, promote your services online, and deliver an exceptional patient experience.

Instantly see how you compare to other practices in your area. Check your online performance for free at <https://compare.patientpop.com/CAP>.

For more information contact:

Email: matt.kervin@patientpop.com

Phone: (844) 487-8399

Web: www.PatientPop.com



Additional PatientPop Resources

PatientPop delivers industry-leading resources and education to give your practice a competitive edge in today's marketplace.

Tap into PatientPop's top healthcare marketing resources, from the latest industry reports and topical videos, to recent provider success stories, educational whitepapers, and much more.

Visit www.PatientPop.com/Resource-Hub

You will find in-depth guidance for:

- Social media marketing
- Acquiring and retaining patients
- Implementing top marketing practices
- Optimizing online search marketing
- Email marketing
- Advertising your practice
- Medical website design tips
- and so much more!



About The Cooperative of American Physicians (CAP)

Since 1977, CAP has served California physicians with the highest quality medical malpractice protection and supportive programs to help physicians succeed.

Upon joining CAP, physician members receive uncompromised service and benefits that include access to free risk reduction services, adverse event management support, and outstanding practice management programs. CAP's seasoned team members offer real solutions to the issues impacting doctors through practice consults, events, communications, online tools and education, and so much more.

For more than 40 years, thousands of physician members have relied on CAP to protect their patients and their practices.

For more information about CAP, or to get a no-obligation quote on medical malpractice coverage, please call **800-356-5672** or email **MD@CAPphysicians.com**.

If you find this CAP guide useful,
please share it with your colleagues!

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Medical professional liability coverage is provided to CAP members through the Mutual Protection Trust (MPT), an unincorporated interindemnity arrangement organized under Section 1280.7 of the California Insurance Code. Members pay assessments, based on risk classifications, for the amount necessary to pay claims and administrative costs. No assurance can be given as to the amount or frequency of assessments. Members also make an Initial Trust Deposit, which is refundable according to the terms of the MPT Agreement.



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