

Eli's Rehab Report

Practice Strategies: Here's How To Market Your At-Home Services

Use these strategies to create a booming at-home therapy practice.

Just offering in-home therapy services won't bring patients flocking to your practice. You have to do a bit of work to get the word out. You should focus on these three top strategies to ensure that patients find out about your at-home services:

#1. Go where potential patients are. Anyone could benefit from at-home therapy, but there are certain populations that are more likely to have an emergent need. Assisted living and senior apartment settings, senior centers, and other facilities that cater to the geriatric population are your best bet for spreading the word about your services, notes **Lynn Steffes, PT** with Steffes & Associates in New Berlin, WI.

Those living or spending time in these places are more likely to have or know someone who has medical conditions that would benefit from in-the-home therapy, such as early stage Alzheimer's disease, stroke, or a newly developed disability.

Also, these facilities offer living spaces in close proximity so that you can work with one patient and then walk a few doors down to work with another -- which will bring your efficiency levels up dramatically.

Good idea: You should also spend some time developing relationships with the management staff at these facilities, Steffes advises. Once they are aware of your services and feel assured that you provide top-notch therapy right in patients' homes, they will recommend you to their residents, customers, and friends.

#2. Offer free education. Marketing for therapy services is very different from marketing other goods and services. Therapists are educators, not sales people -- and no one will respond to a hard sell anyway. Rather, you should offer educational opportunities that will expose patients to your services and establish the relationships that will naturally lead to increased business, says **Peter Kovacek, PT**, co-owner of In Home Rehab and PTManager.com.

How to do it: Offer free balance and falls prevention workshops that are open to residents or center members. Host tai chi or other low-impact, restorative exercise sessions that potential patients and their family members can attend for free. Any health fair or educational type of activity will help you establish relationships that will lead to more exposure and potential new patients.

#3. Get information to the right people. Often, it's not the patients themselves who need to find out about your services - - it's those who are trying to get them to and from appointments.

"The 'sandwich' generation are squeezed for time as they try to get their parents to escalating doctor's appointments while also managing their children's or spouses' schedules," Kovacek notes. They are going crazy trying to "do it all."

Better: Make sure you get your information into these people's hands. You could contact hospital discharge planners so that they know to recommend at-home therapy to time-harried families or focus your educational efforts on the types of community activities that will bring you face-to-face with family managers, Kovacek recommends.

Lesson learned: At-home therapy can be a lucrative alternative to traditional outpatient care if you do the work to let potential patients know about you. And now's the time to do it. "This is an underserved market that's wide open for therapists," Kovacek shares with **Eli**. "We've been doing this a long time and have created really loyal relationships -- and now we're returning patients away," he says.

