



USING THE INTERNET IN YOUR PRACTICE

Part 3: Maximizing your online reach through SEO and pay-per-click

➡ To build a practice, you need to be where patients can find you easily. Today, that is at the top of Google’s search results page.

Ron Romano and Neil H. Baum, MD

It’s high time to go beyond relying on YellowPages.com to attract patients to your practice. According to research and analysis company BIA/Kelsey, “nearly all consumers (97%) now use online media to shop locally.”¹ Today’s patients are Internet savvy and expect their ObGyn not only to be a good physician who diagnoses and treats their conditions but also to demonstrate his or her electronic technical abilities, through online communication, a Web site, email newsletter outreach, and, yes, a social media presence.

Yet, being the best in your field or having an incredible Web site won’t matter if your existing patients and potential new patients can’t find you on the Internet. The solution? Get your Web site onto the first page of Google’s search results. Why? Google is still by far the dominant search engine in the United States, and it has the overwhelming ability to offer you an endless supply of patients. And can your practice survive without a steady flow of new patients?

Type a keyword into the Google search window and dozens, hundreds, or thousands of sites may become visible. Google lists 10 sites per page, however, and when was the last time you went to the second, third, or fourth results page looking for something? If your Web site does not appear on the first results page, you are essentially invisible. The good news is that you can easily and inexpensively reach the top of a search engine’s results page by knowing and applying best

practices for effective search engine optimization (SEO; a free endeavor, although your time investment should be considered) and/or utilizing a pay-per-click (PPC) service (for a fee that’s comparable to what you used to pay for your old *Yellow Pages* listing). In this article, we aim to provide to you the know-how to embark on these endeavors by defining SEO and PPC and relaying effective principles for marketing your practice to potential new patients.

What is SEO?

SEO refers to techniques that help your Web site rank higher in organic (natural) results, which helps your site, and you, become

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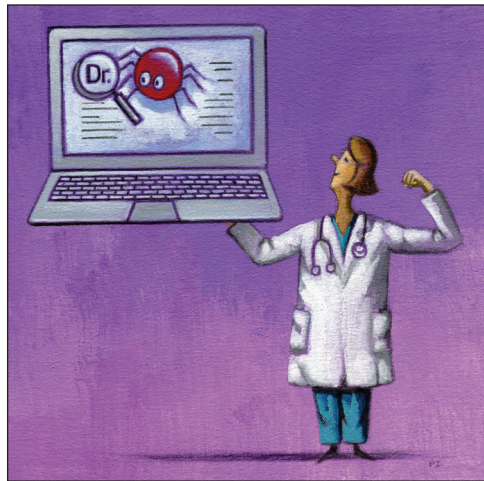


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more visible to people who are seeking your services. Search engines specialize in offering Web surfers the best information about their search terms, or keywords. To do this, Google uses more than 200 different algorithms, some of which we know but most of which are not published.

The algorithms are used to determine where your Web site ranks according to a number of factors relevant to the content and set-up of each page of your Web site (on-page SEO) as well as everything you do

outside of your Web site (off-page SEO) to enhance your SEO rankings. This relevance is calculated by looking at both on-page and off-page factors, including:

- what you are doing in relation to your competition
- how long your Web site has been active
- search engine submission
- article submission
- directory submission
- linking strategies.

You have to work on both on-page and off-page factors many times a month to convince the search engines that you are a Web site worth visiting. Over time, your site will start to rise in the rankings and gain qualified traffic. Then you can concentrate on converting those Web site visitors to office-based patients.

A warning: If you use unethical tactics to get your Web site on the first page of the search results, Google will catch up to you—and your Web-site rankings will plummet.

Five important steps to increase SEO

There's a system to reach the top of any

ILLUSTRATION: PAUL ZWOLAK FOR OBG MANAGEMENT

In this issue and online at www.obgmanagement.com

Incorporating hereditary cancer syndrome screening into daily practice

Shari Goldman Snow, MD, Assistant Professor, Northwestern University, Chicago, Illinois shares her recommendations on using multi-gene panels when testing for hereditary cancers

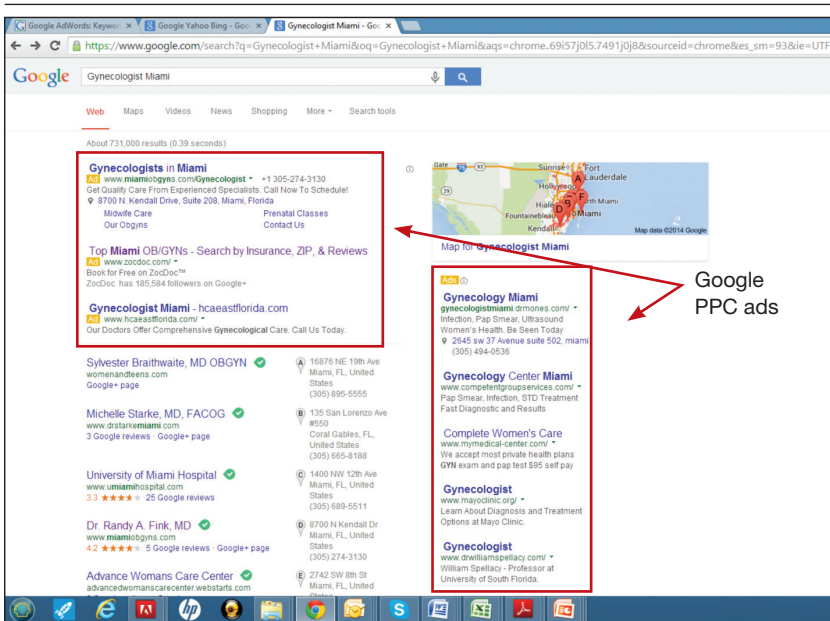
September is Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month
Screen every patient at every visit



This supplement is sponsored by Myriad Genetic Laboratories.



FIGURE 1 PPC placement on Google



fessional who knows Internet coding to help you develop HTML meta tags, anchor text, a sitemap, etc. You easily can incorporate keywords in the copy on your Web site, but the keyword density should be no more than approximately 3% to 5% of the copy. (If it is more than 5%, it is considered “stuffing,” and not looked on kindly by Google.)

3. In-bound links: Who's linking to you?

As the search engine crawlers scan Web pages for indexing, they also look for links from other Web sites. The greater number of quality in-bound links a Web site has, the stronger influence or authority it accrues.

In-bound links are weighted differently: a link from a highly authoritative Web site like NYTimes.com will give a Web site a bigger boost than a link from a small blog site. Links from high-ranking sites, such as city directories, hospitals, and online medical directories, improve your Web-site ranking. You should be submitting your Web site address and keyword description to these appropriate directories for in-bound links on a weekly or monthly basis.

4. Develop new content by blogging

Search engines place a high value on new content, and the easiest way to add new keyword-related content is to blog. Writing a 400-word keyword-relevant blog on a regular basis will provide the search engine crawlers with new content to graze.

As an added bonus, there are many medical ezines—small magazines and newsletters distributed by any electronic method—that regularly need content. Publication of your blog article will provide additional back-links to your Web site and improve your SEO rankings. This is your opportunity to go “viral,” have your material read by thousands, and increase visits to your Web site. When your name appears on multiple sites, you create the perception of demonstrating your expertise in various

search engine's results page. The most important steps are to:

1. Use keywords in your Web site coding, or page description (called meta tags).
2. Use keywords in your Web site copy.
3. Develop in-bound links.
4. Post new keyword-related content regularly—typically accomplished through a blog.
5. Integrate your keywords in social media postings.

1 and 2. Keywords are key

Keywords are what an Internet surfer enters into a search function and what the search engine crawlers hunt for. The crawlers then direct the surfer to the Web site that is perceived as the best source of information.

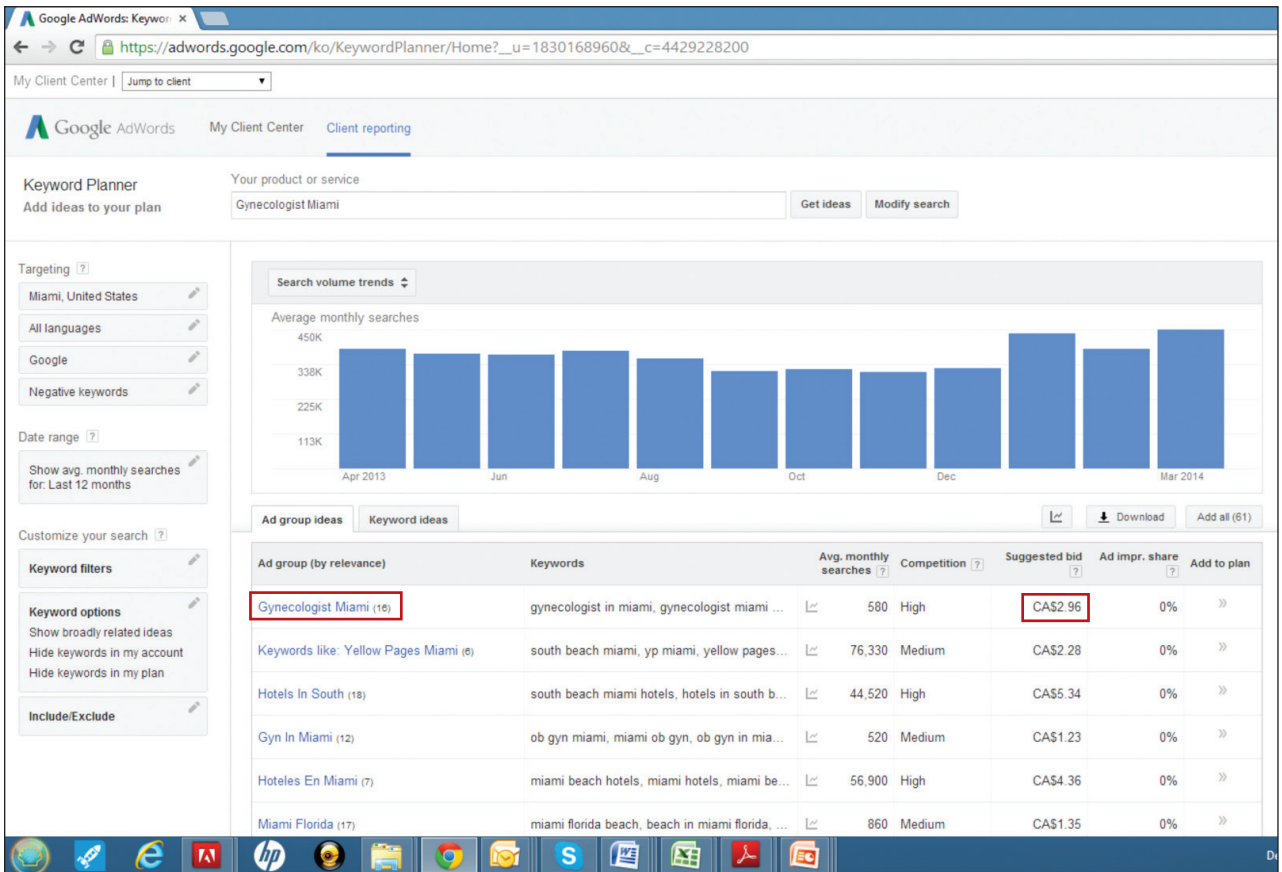
Here are the most popular keywords used by potential patients looking for ObGyns: obstetrician, gynecologist, gynecology, vaginal discharge, vaginal dryness, breast self-exam, breast cancer screening, prolapsed bladder, pelvic pain, and adolescent gynecology. You also should include your city's name as a keyword.

Use keywords in Web site coding and copy. Unless you are experienced in Web development, you're better off hiring a pro-



Creating in-bound links to your Web site using a blog and social media will increase your SEO

FIGURE 2 Google AdWords account page



topics, techniques, and therapeutic options.

5. Search engines love social media

Newer technologies are given greater weight in determining Web page ranking. Start with blogging and then add Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter. Always remember to link from these sites with relevant keywords to the exact page on your site that contains the best information for those keywords.

Advertise your practice using PPC (Google AdWords)

Google, Yahoo, and other Internet portals make their money by selling advertisements on search-results pages. Both paid and organic listings appear on the search results pages, but they are displayed in different locations. On Google, PPC listings are found

on the top and right side of each page under the header “Ads” (FIGURE 1). The organic or natural search (no payment required) is on the left below the ads.

On Google, the PPC function is called “AdWords” (<http://www.google.com/adwords>). On the AdWords page, a listing is found that offers how many times people type in certain words or phrases—keywords. Google AdWords allows the marketplace to bid on keywords; the higher the bid, the closer to the top position on the first page of the Google search results. Depending on monthly search volume, popularity, and competition, you can pay anywhere from pennies to \$25 each time a Web surfer clicks on your ad. In FIGURE 2, you can see that a suggested bid for “Gynecologist Miami” is \$2.96.

You must constantly monitor and manage your AdWords account. Test different landing pages, adjust your copy, and change

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offerings to make sure you are converting your paid traffic to patients. Otherwise, you can spend hundreds of dollars each month without achieving the desired outcome.

By doing your own research with Google AdWords' keyword planner, you will see the variations of keywords that you can use in the copy of your Web site and related content for organic SEO.

Patient conversion: Your ultimate goal

Google is only one piece of the Internet marketing puzzle. Once you have invested in mastering the SEO rankings (by doing it yourself or by paying for professional help), it's up to your Web site to convert the visitor to a paying patient. To maximize your return on investment (ROI), implement marketing strategies and a patient conversion system on your Web site. When a prospective patient lands there, you have less than 10 seconds to engage her. In Part 1

of this series, we discuss features that will keep your visitor involved while she navigates the site and make it easy for her to make an appointment. Don't lose her because she can't find your contact information hidden at the bottom of the page.²

If you don't want to spend the time and effort to do it yourself, outsourcing is a cost-effective solution, *and* a trackable and measurable way for you to calculate your ROI.

Bottom line: Be seen on the Internet. We are all connected to the Internet every waking moment. This is where we go for information; this is how we communicate with each other; and this is where we create relationships. If you want to build your practice, you have to be where your patient can find you—on the top of an Internet search results page. 📌

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2. Baum NH, Romano R. Using the Internet in your practice.

ON THE WEB

Read Parts 1 and 2 of this series, which appeared in the February and April 2014 issues, respectively, at obgmanagement.com