

Simple reminders help market doctor's offices

Doctors don't seem to do much marketing. Most doctors' offices have websites, but besides that, they don't actively engage in marketing. The communications they have is generally one on one, although the more savvy medical offices send out health alerts (e.g., it's flu season and you should get a flu shot) and maybe even health newsletters.

Since most people go to a doctor only when they are sick, it would be better for public and individual health for medical professionals to encourage annual visits. Annual visits would catch potential issues before they become critical. And of course, having a relationship with a doctor makes emergency situations easier to deal with.



Some doctor's offices do encourage annual visits, and they do

it by sending reminders. Some reminders are phone calls, some are emails, and I have even seen printed and mailed letters.

Bad (no contact at all, ever)

One doctor's office I used to go to never sent any reminders at all. Even though they had my email address, I never once got an email from them regarding anything. No calls about annual appointments. No reminder to get an annual flu vaccine. Nothing. Ever. I no longer go to that doctor.

Better (well after the year passed)

An eye doctor I went to for several years called to remind me that I had not had my annual eye exam since November of 2016. It took them more than eight months to realize that I had not been there for more than a year. Of course they had no idea that I had changed eye doctors because of staffing issues.

Best (before the year is up)

The new eye doctor I went to called me in early September to remind that in October it would be a year since my last appointment, and did I want to schedule one now.

Reminders are an opportunity to touch base with patients. They can be a way to schedule an appointment right there and then. There is no down side to medical reminders. They also serve to show patients that doctors want to see them, and that they are not just one more person in a database.

If doctors are not going to do any other marketing, they should at the very least, have a process to remind patients about annual visits.