



Three Keys for Building Referrals, Practices

Referral sources build practices. Building a network takes work. Physical therapist Bob Robinson relies on three pillars that produce results: accessibility, safety and outcomes.

“What the doctors really want more than anything is immediate accessibility to assist them in patient management,” he says. “They have an acute patient in their office and they need to trust it’s safe to send that patient to us for the initial evaluation.”

In that respect, Robinson credits the McKenzie Method® of Mechanical Diagnosis and Therapy® (MDT) for his success. He’s able to take on cases quickly and free up physicians to treat other patients.

The MDT process begins with a thorough mechanical assessment to establish a "cause and effect" relationship between historical back, neck and extremity pain behavior as well as the response to repeated test movements, positions and activities. A systematic progression of applied mechanical forces utilizes pain response to monitor changes in motion and function to classify the disorder.

This baseline assessment can be done in as little as 15 minutes. The method lends itself to timely diagnosis and treatment that keeps patients – and referral sources – happy, says Robinson, co-founder of Craven Physical Therapy & Spine in New Bern, North Carolina.

Referral sources also care about safety, Robinson notes. That’s another advantage the McKenzie Method affords Craven Physical Therapy.

“The assessment can be done in real time,” he says. “MDT is a valid, reliable assessment system that’s based on patient responses in the patient’s history and repeated test movements. This approach reliably identifies red flags and those who are non-responsive to mechanical therapy and are then referred back to the physician in a timely manner.

“We’re reassessing patients on an ongoing basis, visit to visit,” Robinson says. “We can adapt accordingly based on patient response.”

The aim is to apply the necessary interventions to allow for self-management.

He essentially built his referral network with a McKenzie Institute cornerstone – live patient demonstration. Training in the method includes first-hand illustration as a centerpiece.

“I knew the best way to reach doctors was the way McKenzie instructors reach course attendees – I demonstrated the process,” he says. “If you’re confident in what you’re doing – show them. When they see the demonstration, they’ll send the patients.”

He can actually point to one demonstration that changed everything for his business. A neurosurgeon at the nearby medical center developed a spine problem. He was skeptical of the method and after putting off seeing Robinson for some time, the doctor reluctantly gave the McKenzie Method a try. It was the ultimate opportunity for Robinson.

“His problem was fully and quickly resolved through MDT,” he says. “We were prepared and we had the right patient at the right time.”

The medical center was buzzing after that particular case and today Robinson maintains an extensive referral network from an 80-mile radius because of the successful outcomes with MDT.

Among satisfied doctors and patients, word-of-mouth extends his reach. Craven PT employs seven PTs who are all certified or working toward MDT certification and they are planning a major expansion of the clinic.

“McKenzie is very consistent with assessment and the process and it delivers,” Robinson says. Practitioners need to be confident in the treatment and honest about outcomes. “We can identify when people respond quickly, and if they don’t, we send them back to the doctor if we can’t help them.

“You have to show them you’re a resource and not a competitor,” Robinson adds.

Accessibility, safety and outcomes remain key principles for Robinson. His ability to treat patients quickly; apply safe, patient-driven treatment; and demonstrate results all contributed to the growth of his referral network and an ever-increasing number of satisfied patients.