Community Relations

When you get out of your office and interact with the community at large, you help potential patients get to know you. The more comfortable they feel with you, the more likely they are to choose or recommend you.

Although advertising and public relations can reap great results, nothing compares to personal contact. Becoming a supportive and prominent community member shows that you care about your community and your neighbors.

Atrium Speakers Bureau

Let Atrium help connect you with community groups looking for speakers on health issues. Sign up for the Speakers Bureau to give presentations to area civic, service and social groups, professional organizations, schools, churches and business/industry.

You can specify the topics that you'd like to present, as well as the days/times that are best for your schedule. When Atrium receives a request that's a good fit for you, we'll contact you.

- Complete and return the Atrium Speakers Bureau form on page 35.
- For more information, contact Donna C. Banks, physician relations manager at (513) 705-4796.

Events

Events come in all shapes and sizes and are well-suited to practices that need to reach consumers directly. Community events include speaking opportunities, health fairs, festivals and more. Participating in or holding your own community event allows you to interact with potential patients and referrers. The most successful events provide a health screening or other activity in addition to information about your services.

Some community groups will invite you to participate in their events at no charge. Other events require a sponsorship or small fee to participate. This fee, if charged, likely covers expenses incurred by the organizing entity for event publicity, food, entertainment, venue, and other incidentals.

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Speaking events, like those available through the Atrium Speakers Bureau, offer an opportunity to directly share health information with attendees. Before you agree to participate in a speaking event, be sure to know exactly what kind of presentation the organization wants. It is good to ask if you can promote your practice within your presentation. Many organizations will ask that you hold your presentation to more general topics, but will allow you to display promotional materials at the event. It is also good to ask if you are expected to bring your own computer/projector or if this equipment will be provided. If the equipment is provided, make sure your presentation is compatible with the organization's computer software.

Health fairs offer an opportunity to directly interact with the public regarding a specific health topic. Offering your own health screening event allows your practice to develop a pipeline of prospective patients pre-screened for a particular health issue (assuming you had them fill out paperwork that you will keep on file). Participating in a community health fair may or may not afford you the same opportunity to develop a direct patient pipeline, but it may serve to introduce you and your practice to a larger segment of the community.

Community festivals attract large numbers of people. When considering participation in a festival, you will need to balance the benefit of high traffic numbers against the drawback of getting "lost in the crowd" and the cost of participation.

When considering participation in a community event sponsored by someone else, it is good to know the following information:

- What is this event supporting (how will the funds raised be used, and is this something you want to be associated with)
- How long has this event been happening (can be an indication of how well organized the event may be)
- How many people does this event typically attract (more can be better, but you could get lost in an extremely large event)
- What kind of people does the event attract (young, old, families, retirees, etc.)
- Where is the event being held (outside events can be more difficult than inside events – think about what wind and rain will do to your table, brochures and any activity you planned at your booth)
- What are you allowed to provide (can you provide a health screening or something else to attract people to your area)

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- Who else is participating
- What do you need to bring (will the event organizer provide a table, chairs, tent – if outside, electricity, etc.)

Organizing your own event can be rewarding, as well as time consuming. It can also have hidden costs that you may not have considered. When planning your event, take into account the following:

- Audience – who will you invite (existing patients and/or general public)
- Publicity – how will you invite attendees, and what is the cost
- Partners – is there anyone with whom you can partner to share the burden of event planning
- Activities – what will you offer at your event to entice participation (presentation, screenings, family fun, etc.)
- Audio/visual – do you need a projector, screen, sound system, etc.
- Location – will you hold your event at your office, or will you take your event somewhere with a built-in audience (is there a fee for the location)
- Tables/chairs – do you have sufficient tables and chairs, or will you need to rent them
- Refreshments – do you need to provide refreshments
- Giveaways – people love to take something home with them

Tips

- Be sure your practice has knowledgeable, friendly staff on hand at events. It is not enough for you to present or provide screenings at an event. Having knowledgeable staff who can answer basic questions is recommended so that you can answer questions from the public.
- If you plan to make events a regular part of your marketing approach, you may want to invest in a professional tabletop display and/or table skirt to keep your presence professional and appropriately branded.
- Remember to bring to the event:
  - Display
  - Brochures
  - Business cards
  - Give-away items that promote your office, or wrapped candy
- Partner with Atrium Medical Center to reach potential patients at community events. Contact Donna C. Banks, physician relations manager at (513) 705-4796 to learn how your practice can be part of hospital-sponsored events.

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