

CARDIOLOGY PRACTICE CASE STUDY 0015

PHYSICIAN LIAISON MARKETING RESULTS IN 287% INCREASE IN REFERRALS

In this case study, the terms “physician liaison” and “practice rep” are interchangeable. In our view, a physician liaison is responsible primarily for representation whereas a practice rep is responsible for both representation and marketing for a practice.

A large cardiology practice, based in the Southeast Pennsylvania suburbs, was founded over 23 years ago and now staffs more than 60 board certified physicians in an extremely competitive marketplace. The practice had cared for an underserved market until the late 1990s when two smaller groups merged to compete more effectively against this community leader in full-service cardiology care.

In 1998, after losing a significant number of referrals to the competing groups as well as natural attrition of referral sources, the group decided to institute a practice rep-based marketing program aimed at the referral community. The goal was to address the needs and concerns of past and current referrals while communicating the unique capabilities of the practice in the specialties of nuclear stress testing and ultrasound diagnostics.

A part-time physician liaison with a non-clinical background was hired to represent the practice to the PCP offices in the community. The rep began informally surveying the community to determine perceptions of the practice's:

- Ease of patient access
- Physician communication
- Acceptance of popular insurances
- Capitation
- Diagnostic capabilities
- Ancillary services

Based on the community feedback, this practice rep then went on to develop branded scripts, fax referral forms, insurance acceptance guides, and other proprietary marketing materials that addressed the needs and concerns of the referral community. These materials were then distributed in person during “lunch and learns” and other personal meetings with the entire PCP office staff.

Results

After just one year of utilizing this personal approach to marketing, the cardiology practice realized a 287% increase in outside referrals for nuclear and ultrasound diagnostics. This growth continued the following year, with another 46% increase in those same diagnostic areas. At the conclusion of year two, the group served more than 52 new referring doctors who were not sending prior to the onset of practice rep marketing. This included groups who started by sending for diagnostic procedures and evolved into sending general consults for cardiology.