



MAKING CONNECTIONS, BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

First impressions last forever. This document will empower you to make great first impressions with your potential partners. There are a few things to keep in mind as you position yourself as a partner with family physicians, nurse practitioners and other health care professionals. Be ready to:

1. Clearly and concisely make an “elevator pitch” that conveys the benefits of a partnership with you,
2. Seek to understand their needs/clinical environment,
3. Communicate with busy health care colleagues in a way that leaves a lasting impression, and,
4. Demonstrate how your expertise can help to solve some of the challenges your potential partners are facing in practice every day.

Recap: Elements of an Effective “Elevator Pitch”

An elevator pitch delivers your message in the time it takes to travel a few floors in an elevator. You will remember from page two that your elevator pitch should:

- Describe who you are and what you can bring to the partnership.
- Be concise and confident. Rehearse your elevator pitch and get it down to just a few moments.
- Have a specific “ask” that is easy to say “yes” to. Your first goal may be to line up another meeting.
- Remember that there is a difference between being confident and being aggressive. Take care to not seem too forceful or sales focused.

TIPS FOR INITIAL CONTACT (via email, letter or phone)

1. Make a Connection

If you have previously connected with someone, you can personalize a follow-up email, letter or phone call. If not, you can increase the chances you’ll receive a response by telling them how you learned about their practice and what you know about them.

For example:

- Your practice first came to my attention when I received a patient referral from you. In talking to the patient, I realized you were located just down the street from me.
- We met at the Ontario Health Teams' primary care symposium last month and we had a nice chat about some of the wonderful changes we’ve seen in our community over the years.



2. Why Are You Reaching Out?

Getting a conversation started is the first step. It is important to clearly communicate your professional reasons for reaching out without being too forward. In these early dialogues, you should be focused on assessing whether the provider is receptive to a discussion.

For example:

- My understanding is that up to 25 per cent or more of primary care patient visits are for MSK problems, such as low back pain. I would appreciate the opportunity to speak with you about team-based approaches to caring for these patients so that I can learn more about your practice and the impact of musculoskeletal conditions on your patients.
- I'm trying to learn more about the prevalence of MSK conditions in primary care physicians' offices. Given that my practice is focused on MSK conditions, I see these patients all the time—but I'm wondering how frequently patients with conditions like low back pain come into your office.

3. Emphasize Your Area of Focus and Encourage Further Communication

As chiropractors are known for their MSK expertise, it's important to clearly indicate that you're interested in MSK patient care in particular, offering to tell them more about how you practice.

For example:

- If you are able to chat with me, I'd be happy to tell you a bit about my practice and the ways in which I collaborate with other primary care providers in their efforts to support their MSK patients.
- I hope we have a chance to speak further soon. It would be great to pick your brain about how you approach patient care, and I'd love to tell you about how I work with MSK patients.

The key to both of these approaches is to keep the lines of communication open. Rarely will a single email exchange, phone call or meeting result in the establishment of a strong referral relationship. An ongoing dialogue gives the relationship time to strengthen and evolve.

4. Leverage Third-Party Validation

Trust is crucial in any relationship – especially a new one. This can be established very effectively through “third-party validation.” If you share patients with the family physician in your building, tell other practitioners about the great health outcomes you have achieved together. If you have worked well in the past with a local health care provider, describe the work you did together and encourage your potential partners to ask them about your contributions. Especially when professional networks overlap, the power of third-party validation can be enormous.

5. Tell Them a Little About Yourself

Finally, while you want to keep your initial communication (e.g. an email or letter) fairly brief, it's important to include some key details about yourself including your name and the location of your practice. If you're involved in any volunteer efforts in your community, you may wish to highlight this as well!



TIPS FOR SUBSEQUENT FOLLOW-UP AND DISCUSSIONS

You have a lot of important information to share. Some of these things are best communicated in subsequent discussions, once a connection has been established.

Training and Credentials

The path to becoming a practicing chiropractor in Ontario is a long and challenging one. Most other health professionals won't be familiar with the details of your training. Be sure to mention that chiropractors, like physicians and nurse practitioners, are regulated under the Regulated Health Professions Act. You might consider sharing how you became a chiropractor, including any additional specializations you have earned since graduating. This will help them to clearly understand what you can offer their patients.

Clinic Information

It's helpful to share information on things like the main focus of your practice, the number of years you've been practicing, the size of your practice and the other health professionals at your clinic. You may even throw in details like why you became a chiropractor and where you hope to see your practice thriving in the future. This story is a great way to engage other health practitioners in a discussion about partnership... because they have a story too. This conversation will help you identify shared values and approaches to patient care.

Description of Services

It's useful to offer a brief overview of any particular health focuses of your clinic. For example, you may focus on acute and chronic back pain, repetitive strain injuries, sports related MSK injuries or older adult care.

Referral Protocol

Have you ever referred a patient out to another practitioner you were still getting to know? Do you remember having a twinge of anxiety about it? It's a natural thing. Expanding the care team for a patient can be stressful. You are invested in their care and you want to be sure they're in good hands.

All good health care practitioners feel that way, including the ones you hope will refer their patients to you. By describing your referral protocols and practices (e.g. sharing clinical notes with your patient's physician or nurse practitioner), you'll help to set their mind at ease. It will emphasize that you value strong two-way communication and transparency when sharing patient care.