

Selecting Your Ideal Practice Location

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When considering opening a new office, relocating, or expanding the locations of an existing practice, chiropractors need to spend more time in the planning stage than ever before. The increasing demands of the marketplace, as well as escalating standards of care, have created an environment in which hanging out your shingle without adequate preparation is not even close to a viable reality.

Examine Your Why

Before you begin your search for the ideal location, ask yourself the following question: “WHY do I want to be in practice?”. This simple question has the power to shape your destiny when you get serious about answering it honestly and thoroughly. If you answer with generalities that could apply to just about anyone, you won’t achieve the maximum benefits from adequately pondering the question. It has been said that people have two reasons for doing anything, a good reason, and the real reason. You must explore your true motivations. The better you understand why you are in the business, the better decisions you can make to ensure a successful outcome.

Next, Consider Your How and Who

Next on your list of important questions is: “HOW am I going to practice and WHO do I want to serve?” Will it be a cash-only Practice? Insurance? Personal Injury? Workers’ Comp? Mixed? If you are unsure, take the time to speak with others who have already been down the road, and who can help you select the best model that most suits you. Do you have a vision of caring for athletes? Do you see yourself in a pediatric practice? Is your ideal practice a family practice that cares for many ages and conditions? Would you enjoy the drama of the courtroom and serving as expert witness in Personal Injury cases? Perhaps you would like to make a big impact in Industrial Healthcare? Would you be most effective in a high-volume, cash practice? It’s quite possible that your answer may be a combination of one or more of the above.

Now, Focus on Where

The process of discovering your WHY, HOW, and for WHOM allows you to address the question on which this article focuses: WHERE. There is an axiom in business that there are three keys to success: location, location, and location. Why the over emphasis? Because, if you want to deliver a product or service to the public, then you will be most successful if you are located where the public is willing to go. The best location for your practice is in a convenient, highly visible, and easily accessible office. The easier you make it for potential patients to find and use your services, the more quickly you will achieve the level of success you desire.

Have a Long-Term Vision

Selecting a location should be done with the same care as selecting a spouse or significant other. You want a long, healthy, prosperous, and happy lifetime together, so treat the decision with an eye toward the long term. Chances are that you will spend many years building and growing your practice in the location you choose, so it’s important for you to consider where you would like to live for the long term. Are you happier by the sea, in the mountains, or on the plains? Would you prefer a location out in the

country, or in a bustling metropolis? When you blend where you want to be with where you are wanted and needed, your experience will be rewarding and fulfilling.

Develop a wish list of the geographic and demographic features that most inspire you. Hop on a plane or get in the car and drive through the areas you are considering. Be sure that you can see yourself becoming a vital part of the community surrounding your practice. Once you have performed this important step, you should then review the legislative laws, insurance laws and regulatory climate in the states that match your ideal geographic location.

Narrow Your Choices

Begin by narrowing your search down to those states that both meet your geographic requirements and that have a legal and reimbursement environment that will support the vision you hold for your practice. Once you have selected the state, select a town and then a specific neighborhood within the town. The demographics regarding the density of providers compared to the population is important. You can obtain a list of all practicing chiropractors from the Chiropractic Examining Board in the state you intend to locate. Demographics of approximately 10,000 population per chiropractor is considered ideal. When the ratio dips below 5,000 people per chiropractor, then the public already has many choices and to achieve success, your marketing efforts will need to be more energetic and possibly more costly.

Match Your Location with Your Vision

The most successful approach is to locate your practice close to where you are guaranteed to attract the greatest number of new patients today, tomorrow, and in the years to come. The age, education, income, educational level, and ethnic composition of your market is also important to consider, as this data will allow you to select a match to the ideal practice you have in mind. You can find a summary of information from the last U.S. census at the library. For example, if your vision is to develop a Workers' Compensation practice and to become the occupational medicine "go to doctor" in your area, then your location should be convenient to where there is a high density of industry. If you have set your sights on a practice of working with elite athletes, you must locate your facility in an area where the athletes are, such as a college or sports complex. A retirement community in south Florida would obviously be the wrong location for a pediatric practice!

Take the time to make the right decisions in selecting your new location. You can greatly lessen the risk of making costly errors when selecting your new location by enlisting the assistance of a coach or mentor. Get advice from someone who is familiar with your market, with a track record of successfully opening new practices. You will find that with adequate preparation, you will avoid the infamous new practice "starvation" period and will open the doors to an office set to grow to the level of success of your dreams.