

Dear Functional Medicine Discussion Group Members:

Once again, we had an awesome Functional Medicine Discussion Group meeting in January on **How to Market a Functional Medicine Practice** with the brilliant and beautiful **Miriam Zacharias**. Miriam is a true professional who gives great value in her presentations. We have all been to seminars where the speaker teases you with hints of information, but you have to buy their course before you actually learn anything useful. But Miriam shared many valuable insights with us and made many of us rethink our websites and our other marketing efforts. We thank **Metagenics**, once again, for sponsoring the food and the venue, and for having supported our group since we started. Thanks to all our members who participated in the meeting. Our next meeting will be **Thursday, February 23** at 6:30 and **Dr. Mark Pimentel** who discovered the connection between SIBO and IBS will join us for a discussion on gastrointestinal health. **Please email me if you will be able to attend.** I will send out another email with some papers to read in a week or so. Read Dr. Pimentel's book, A New IBS Solution, <http://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/a-new-ibs-solution-mark-pimentel-md/1111493121?ean=2940014778237> If you are not already a member, please join **our closed Facebook page, Functional Medicine Discussion Group of Santa Monica.**

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Is it easier or more difficult to market your practice today, Miriam asked? Miriam explained that it is easy now to create a web site, write a blog, produce a podcast, and put together an online course. But this also means that so many people have websites and blogs, etc. that it is difficult for someone to find you in the crowded internet space. The good news is that the acceptance of Functional Medicine is greater than ever before. Unless you currently have a booming referral practice, you have to do some marketing and you have to get good enough at it to be successful. Miriam noted that you don't have to be great at it, and you don't have to do everything.

Ms. Zacharias emphasized the point that even though we as Functional Medicine practitioners train to see the wholistic connections between various health factors and to see the connections between the various systems of the body that many conventional medical specialists often overlook, it is not a good idea to market yourself simply as offering wellness or wholistic health or functional medicine. Potential patients rarely go looking for those types of things. They have a concern or problem and go looking for someone who can help them with that. Many websites focus primarily on credentials and services and programs and that is often not what people are looking for, at least not at first. The average person spends 2.9 seconds on your web site, so if you don't connect with them, they are gone.

People don't buy what you do, but they buy **why** you do it. Miriam cited Simon Sinek as a good reference for understanding this concept and here is a Ted talk that he gave on this topic: https://www.ted.com/talks/simon_sinek_how_great_leaders_inspire_action Miriam explained that

Sinek points out that individuals come to you because they see that you are passionate about the work that you do, that you have a real deep sense of purpose for what you do. **We need to use purpose, our why, as the first step in our marketing efforts.**

Miriam told us this heart wrenching story about how her brother needed bypass surgery at an early age and due to a mistake in the surgery and HIV in a blood transfusion he died three years later. Then her mother got depressed and stopped eating and died. Her other brother had a break from reality and was put into a mental institution with schizophrenia and then her father died in disgust. So in a short period of time, she had lost her whole family. This led her to quit her long standing sales job with Microsoft to go into nutrition, so she could prevent people like her brother to prevent heart disease. She did this for a while until she realized that her passion was really in showing nutritional practitioners how to be successful, utilizing her sales background.

Your strategic advantage in the field we are in is your story, which is unique to you. **When you connect with your purpose, with your why, and you use this in your marketing, you will be seen as authentic and new clients will flock to you.** This is the first step to master before you get to the second step in the Peace Process (Miriam's book on marketing and the process she advocates), which is to establish your market identity. It is easy to get disconnected from your why and lose your focus in your practice and get distracted. If you write your story about why you got into Functional Medicine in your About section of your web site, clients who visit it will be attracted to you if they agree with you.

Next, you need to create a market identity so potential customers will be attracted to you. You need to establish yourself as an authority, which means you need to pick a niche to focus your marketing efforts so you can be seen as an expert in that area. People do not search and look for someone who does everything and are generalists, but rather they search for someone who specializes in the specific problem they are having. Just like your health can be impacted by a nutritional deficiency, a low load of patients can be caused by a messaging deficiency. Maybe you have low patient list size, because when you go to talk, you don't collect names. There could be low community awareness. You may have a me too brand. Your website and your presence looks like everybody else and everything else. Patients will then start to shop on price, since they can't differentiate the differences between practitioners. If your website touts optimal wellness and the patient is struggling to get out of bed, it won't appeal to them. People want to work with an expert, with a specialist, say with someone who has expertise in thyroid, who wrote the book, who has the course, who will have the right tests and supplements that will work for them.

Just because you have a niche, doesn't mean you can't treat other conditions or take a wholistic approach that looks at many underlying causes. This doesn't mean you can't take a wholistic perspective in your clinical care, just not in your marketing. You can still work with patients with conditions other than your niche. There is a formula for figuring out your niche. First you must figure out your purpose. There is a formula to help you figure out your niche. You can ask yourself the following, **I want to help X with condition Y to achieve which outcome Z?**

Your website and marketing should focus on helping clients achieve specific results. **People buy results.** Most women are not sitting around thinking that they need to balance their hormones. **They are thinking they need to sleep, they want to look sexy again, they want their sex life back.** This is what will attract them, not saying that you will help them balance their hormones.

Miriam explained that niching will help you save a lot of money and time and energy. Once you figure out your ideal niche, it can help you decide which tests to look into and which conferences to go to and which journals to read and which supplements to research and carry, which group to go speak to, etc. Your niche could be a specific condition or system like thyroid or blood sugar imbalances or it could be people in certain circumstance, like busy Moms who need healthy fast recipes or athletes who want to build lean muscle or helping young couples get pregnant.

Miriam spoke about websites and discussed what should be on your home page in order to capture that person who spends an average of 3 seconds to become a patient or client. In order to capture that person, what matters most is your message, your design, and your ongoing connection that you create in order to make those 6 to 16 connections that on average are required to convert that person into a patient. On your home page you must put that you know who your niche market is, that you care, and that you can help them. Make sure your website is not all about you. The message should be that you know who that ideal client is and what they want. And it should capture the feeling and the results that they desire. You need to make sure your photo is on your website—not a photo of a model. Clients want to look in your eyes and connect.

Also keep in mind that your website must have some emotional appeal because people tend to buy on emotions first and science and logic later. Your website must also help you to build an ongoing connection with that person because most people need between 6 and 16 exposures to you before making a decision to work with you. They must know, like, and trust you. Your website should make your potential patient know that you understand their problem and that you can help. It also helps to have a tagline or simple brand statement about who you are appealing to.

Miriam talked a little about search engine optimization. She mentioned that Google is looking for relevant content. You must update it on a regular basis. You should use the words that Make sure your site is mobile responsive. Also, your site should load quickly within 1.5 seconds. She mentioned a great book that explains this web navigation stuff, *Don't Make Me Think*.

http://www.barnesandnoble.com/p/dont-make-me-think-revisited-steve-krug/1124330651/2675158679620?st=PLA&sid=BNB_DRS_Marketplace+Shopping+Textbooks_0000000&2sid=Google_&sourceId=PLGoP20420&k_clickid=3x20420 The number of navigation buttons should max at about 7 or 8. You don't want too many words on your home page. You don't want your site to be too cluttered and busy. A photo of you (not a stock photo) and a byline is better than lots of text. If you have a video, make sure it is under 2 minutes. She recommended avoiding those rotating banners on your home page and a static page is better. Also avoid too many dropdown menus. And put the most important information on the upper left part of your page, which should be your picture and your tagline.

Miriam mentioned that you need to claim your Google business listing, if you haven't already. Respond to reviews. One of the doctors mentioned that Yelp will let you have three different listings for the same address as long as you have three different web sites.

One of the most important thing your web site can do is to help you build your mailing list of potential prospects. This will allow you to continue to communicate with them till you create those 6-16 contacts before they decide to become a customer. Also, this will help you if you are selling a product or giving a talk. You want to capture emails through those capture boxes that say put down your email and get this free ebook, or this free guide about how to eat better, etc. Few people want to opt in just for a newsletter, since nobody wants another newsletter to read. It is best not to try to sell them anything yet on this first opt in. Now that you have their email, you can send them a simple blog post monthly, which is what Miriam does. Avoid overpromotion and avoid constantly badgering them trying to sell them. Don't send them an offer to buy something more than once per quarter or at most every few months. You are building a relationship. Once per month for emails is good to start with. You can try weekly or more frequently and judge by the number of unsubscribes if you are sending too many out.

Email marketing is much more effective than social media. For social media to be effective, you have to post a lot—once per day on Facebook and 6-8 times per day on Twitter. Randomly posting things that have to do with Functional Medicine is a fruitless endeavor.

That's most of what Miriam spoke about. She did a great job delivering some awesome content on marketing. Also her book, **The Peace Process**, is an awesome resource with lots of great information about how to market a functional medicine practice. She is currently offering an e course on marketing a Functional Medicine practice at a very affordable special low price, so check it out and sign up: <https://miriamzacharias.leadpages.net/peaceprocessecourse/>

Also, please check out my new weekly podcast, the Rational Wellness podcast on Itunes <http://www.drweitz.com/2017/01/rational-wellness-podcast-episode-002-preventing-heart-disease-with-dr-howard-elkin/> or on Youtube <https://youtu.be/iNSSki8MQsk> .