

INDEPTH: Does Your Website Suffer from “Linkitis”?

By David Evans, PhD, MBA

You probably go for yearly check-ups with your primary care physician and make sure you are up-to-date on all your screening examinations. You likely insist your patients do the same. Correct?

Well, your website also needs an occasional check-up. If your Google rankings aren't where you want them to be, it's time to check your site's vital signs.

Your site may be suffering from several conditions, including content failure and “linkitis,” all of which can cause your rankings to tank. Take a look at your Google Analytics account and see if there were any sudden traffic drops during the last 2 years.

If so, this may indicate one of the following illnesses.

DX: CONTENT FAILURE

Once upon a time, Google valued sites with a lot of pages. Many website companies created websites for their clients whose before-and-after photo galleries eventually grew to be thousands of pages, because each picture was placed on a separate page. Now, Google sees these individual pages as low quality and can penalize your site.

Another manifestation of content failure is a slew of pages on the same subject, with the only difference being that each is devoted to a different town. This was part of an old-school search strategy that was employed when surgeons wanted to rank for a given procedure in all parts of their geographic area.

Rx: Watchful waiting. Sometimes your site may have symptoms of a problem, but it is not sick. Don't enact major changes, just



ranking well despite a suspected case of content failure. Removing thousands of pages from a website is like major surgery in that there is always a risk of complications. On the other hand, if your site is showing symptoms and then gets hit by a Google algorithm update, you can be sure that your site has come down with a true case of content failure. In this case, you must get rid of all these similar pages.

DX: LINKITIS

Your previous search engine optimization company may have purchased hundreds of links from farms or other spammy websites. Or maybe your previous marketing manager received one of those too-good-to-be-true emails offering 1,000 links for \$50 a month and went for it. Either way, Google may diagnose your site with linkitis.

Rx: The good news is that linkitis is usually acute, not chronic. The bad news is that it is impossible to know which links, and how many of these links, make the site sickly. Use Google Webmaster tools to determine if the site has received any warnings from Google for unnatural links.

Webmaster tools also shows how many links Google detects coming to your site. Are there a lot from the same website or from websites unrelated to your practice? If so, this could be a sign of poor health. Do some detective work to figure out which links are causing Google to diagnose your site with linkitis, and take steps to remove them. (Google has a new tool that indicates when the link

to your site was first detected. You can use this to determine who added links to your site.)

DX: VIRAL LINKITIS

Sometimes linkitis is caught from another site. Let's say you sponsored an organization several years ago. The organization, in turn, was so grateful that it placed an acknowledgement of your sponsorship, with a link to your site, on every page of its website. New pages may have been added to the organization's website, and they all include an acknowledgement and link. Google sees this as a spreading case of linkitis.

Rx: Once the site gets hit, someone on your team has to identify the problem and reach out to the organization to have the links removed—STAT.

Your website needs a clean bill of health to help grow and promote your practice. If you haven't had a check-up in a while, now's the time. As they say in medicine, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, and that is certainly true when it comes to Internet marketing.

- See more at: <http://www.plasticsurgerypractice.com/2013/07/indepth-does-your-website-suffer-from-linkitis/#sthash.Crv0oCds.dpuf>

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