

How to Target Niche Markets for Search Engine Optimisation



We all know by now that simply having a website for our business is not going to bring clients flocking to our doors. However, it is a necessary good start. The next thing to do is to optimise your website and web pages so that it can be not only found by search engines but also score the appropriate points to be ranked high up in the results list. After all, when do you ever scroll on to the second page of search results? This article is an introduction to how web pages can be optimised to rank highly in the results of niche searches – ie. people looking for very specific information about certain conditions or treatments in their local area. These are exactly the kind of people we want to find our websites because they are already half way to becoming a customer, so what's not to love?

By Chris Dann,
founder of
Market Your
Clinic Online

Optimising Webpages For Niche Searches

Although the majority of people looking for a physical therapist will search online for the type of therapist they're looking for, eg. physiotherapist, osteopath, etc, many will search for the individual condition they are looking for help with, eg. 'sports injury clinic', 'running injury', 'treatment for carpal tunnel' and so on. Some people might also search for the sort of treatment they are looking for, eg. 'shockwave treatment near me' or 'kinesio taping'.

Although most websites are generally naturally optimised for our primary service (eg. physiotherapist), we stand to gain many more potential patients if we also appear in these niche searches of people who are looking for a particular treatment that we offer, or a particular condition that we treat. This is particularly true if we have a specialism, such as pre-/post-natal physiotherapy, neurophysiotherapy, and so on.

Although fewer people overall are searching in this way (there are far fewer people searching for 'pre-natal physiotherapy' than simply for

'physiotherapy', for example), there are big advantages to appearing high up in Google results lists for these niche searches. Firstly, the potential patient is already very clear about what they want, so are far more likely to go with a local specialist than they are to shop around, and secondly there are far fewer therapists optimising for these niche searches in the first place, so we face far less competition to rank highly for them in the search results if we optimise our web pages correctly.

Data-Driven Optimisation

Although we can simply create content around anything we feel we would like to treat and hope for the best, we can use our efforts far more efficiently if we have some data around the searches people are making.

Firstly, we need to know **what niche searches patients are making**.

There is no point creating content to optimise our website for 'tendonitis' when very few people are using this term to search for local treatment, and over 50 times as many people are searching for treatment for 'plantar fasciitis' (as is the case).

Some conditions rank relatively high in results lists on national (known as **informational**) searches but much lower on results lists for people actually searching for treatment. 'Tennis elbow',

for example, ranks relatively high in searches for general information but significantly lower when compared to other conditions on results lists for people actually searching for local treatment. Of course, if you are a recognised expert in a particular niche and your patients are willing to travel a significant distance to see you, the national search volumes become more relevant.

Using this data firstly to choose the most fertile conditions or treatments to optimise for, we also need to know the language people use to search for treatment. For example, people searching for 'sports injury' treatment almost exclusively search for a 'sports injury clinic', whereas people with back pain or fibromyalgia search far more often for a 'specialist', and those with plantar fasciitis search for simply 'treatment'.

We can use this data to inform the way we word our pages. A webpage called 'Back Pain Specialist in Bristol' will, all other things being equal, get more traffic than one called 'Back Pain Treatment in Bristol', and so on, and knowing these nuances is both important and powerful.

Creating Niche Pages

Now that we know the conditions or treatments we want to optimise for and

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the words people are actually typing into search engines to look for them, we are ready to create niche-specific pages, or blog posts, to target those terms. Search engine optimisation (SEO) is, of course, a very big area and there is much that goes into creating a webpage about a condition or treatment that successfully ranks highly in the list of search results. However, we can give some general principles.

First of all we need to remember that we are writing pages to target users who are **looking for local treatment**, ie. people typing in 'back pain Bristol', 'back pain near me', and so on (Fig. 1) (Box 1). So the webpage should not only discuss the condition or treatment, but also make it very clear that treatment is available from your clinic, and the location of that clinic. Google will then be far more likely to return that page in the search results when it recognises that it is local treatment that the user is searching for. Of course, this is good practice in any case from the point of view of **conversion** (the process of encouraging people to move from simply browsing your website to becoming paying clients), as we should be adding frequent calls to action on the page inviting the user to download a helpful resource, book an appointment and pointing out the location of our clinic and any other selling points we have (such as easy parking, evening appointments and so on).

Secondly, we then aim to explain the condition and its treatment in a target of approximately 1000–1500 words. A mistake many practitioners make here is to dive straight into their own treatment without answering wider questions the searcher might have. For a condition page, begin by discussing the condition and treatment options in very general terms. For example, a back pain page might include a brief discussion of treatment options including everything from painkillers to surgery. We then move on to how our particular treatment fits into this scheme and how it works, before moving on to Why choose us? material.

Exactly what to discuss on the page will depend on the condition. Here again, search data gives us a very

Box 1: Terms that send Google into local mode

With search terms such as 'specialist' and 'clinic' we have an advantage, as these are local **trigger** terms which generally send Google into **local** mode and return a map with local results in the same way as if we had specified a location or typed 'near me'.

large helping hand. When we look at informational search data, we find the concerns and questions people have around any given condition or treatment. For example, the largest informational search volumes around 'hip pain' are 'injections' and 'yoga' (Fig. 2). Although these are not services we necessarily offer, by including sections on the page such as Do I need an injection for my hip pain? or Can yoga help with my hip pain? we are far more likely to be in step with the questions that the searcher is actually asking, and therefore far more likely to convert them into a booking.

Lastly, ensure that it is clear to the user and to Google that you – a qualified medical professional – are the one putting your name to this information. This has been important since Google's so-called Medic update in 2018, aimed at preventing people from finding medical advice online from those not qualified to give it, and self-diagnosing or self-treating incorrectly. You can do this by simply creating an About the author or Medical review section at the end of the page, stating who you are, your qualifications and title, and a link to your practitioner page if you have one (Fig. 3).

The Role of Local Authority

Authority is the missing piece of the jigsaw puzzle which is so frequently overlooked in SEO.

In a hypothetical situation, let's say that there are several local clinics, all of which have identical websites and are the same distance away from the person making the search. How will Google decide which one to put at the top of the search results? The answer is **authority**, or in simple terms how important or popular Google considers you to be (Fig. 4).

A variety of factors contribute to

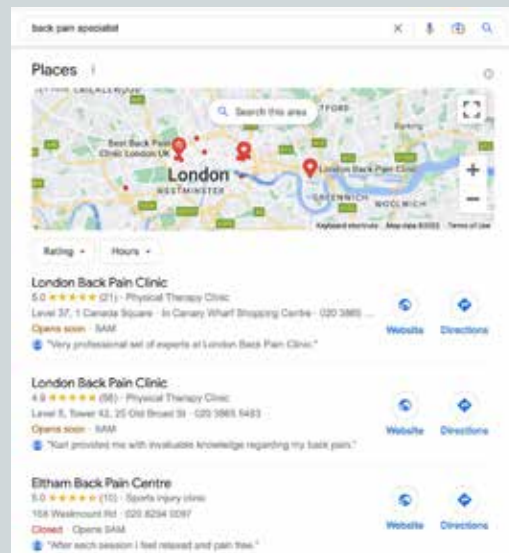


Figure 1: Adding a location, the words 'near me', or certain terms such as 'specialists' put Google into local mode and return a map with local results

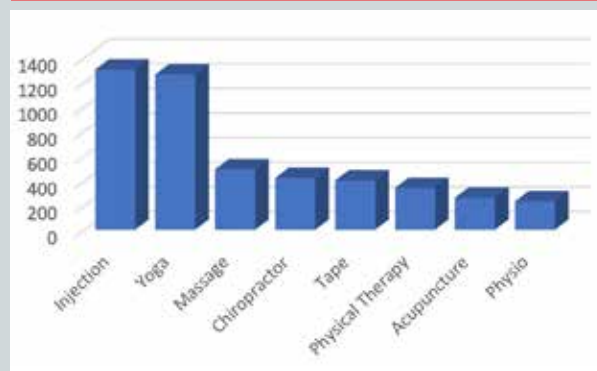


Figure 2: UK Monthly Searches for 'hip pain' plus another term



Figure 3: With any medical information it is crucial to demonstrate to Google that it has been written or reviewed by a qualified professional



Figure 4: Your domain authority is a large factor in your SEO rankings

Case Study

In Spring 2022, we created condition pages for an osteopathic clinic to target searches for back pain, sciatica, scoliosis and sports injury.

After creating targeted pages for these conditions in March, we measured local SEO rankings over the next 3 months to see the difference. We saw a jump in the results rankings of the niche search terms that we were targeting into the top spots on Google, where previously the listings had been buried down on page 3 or 4 or not listed at all before the optimisation. Most striking was a jump from 38th place to 1st place for 'back pain near me', a key search phrase.

The clinic in question already had a reasonable domain authority, which allows condition page creation to move the SEO needle more strikingly than for low-authority domains. However, the authority of your website should generally increase over time as you continue to publish useful content, and keep building your reputation and inbound links locally.

A physical therapy SEO specialist can help you decide on the best strategy for your clinic, which may include condition page creation, blogs and other content creation, and proactive authority building.

Case Study Results

Search term	Ranking in Google search results list	
	March 2022 (pre-SEO)	June 2022 (post-SEO)
Back pain near me	38	1
Sciatica treatment near me	50+	3
Back pain West Hampstead	11	2
Back pain Hampstead	47	5
Scoliosis physical therapy near me	50+	7
Scoliosis treatment near me	50+	10
Back pain	50+	14

You can see the full case study at <https://bit.ly/3BiN94s>.

building authority. Originally, authority was based simply on the quantity of inbound links to your website, so a website with 500 other websites linking to it was considered higher authority than a website with only 50. This led to a proliferation of paid 'spam links', and Google has since become more and more sophisticated.

Links are still important, but Google is looking for **relevance**, either in terms of location (eg. a link from the local press), or subject (eg. a link from a running magazine to your running injury page) and is more likely to discount irrelevant links, or even penalise for them if it considers your link profile to look overly 'spammy'.

Building quality inbound links to your site takes time and effort, and involves forming genuine relationships with other local organisations who will be prepared to refer to you or to link to your site. The key is to always be offering value and something of use. This might be in the form of useful blog posts, advice sheets and factsheets, discounts to relevant organisations, sponsoring local events, or giving your time for free – say for a talk at a local running club – in exchange for a link back from their site. Good link building is inseparable with relationship and profile-building in general. It requires proactivity, and the attitude of giving in order to get.

One great way to do this is to offer free events and webinars – such as the talk in the example above – to anyone who's interested. This serves to raise

your profile as the local expert who runs free events to help others, widens your net for potential patients – as people are far more likely to share and talk about your free event than about your clinic – and creates great link-building potential, as it is in the interest of local media, blogs, etc, to get the word out about your event, all with a link back to your site.

This is exactly why the Co-Kinetic Clinic Growth subscription gives you all the tools, including the presentation itself, to help you organise and run these type of events as their importance cannot be overstated when it comes to both generating new customers and also building an authoritative SEO presence.

Evidence-Based Marketing Course

Co-Kinetic have asked me to write an SEO course module for their upcoming Evidence-Based Marketing (EBM) course, due to launch in the first quarter of 2023. This full EBM course will be a 14 week, hands-on, online course involving teaching as well as having time set aside for implementation, and will take you through the whole process of building an audience, nurturing trust and then culminating in running an event, designed specifically to generate new customers. You will be supported throughout the course with ready-to-use content at every level.

This article forms the basis of SEO modules to be included in this course. In those modules I'll take you through

SEO of your website from the ground up, the latest developments in how SEO will work in 2023, and search data for various conditions and therapies so you know not only how to optimise your website, but the most fruitful terms to optimise it for. We will provide you with articles and content which we will then help you optimise for your chosen specialities/skill set. To register your interest for the course visit <https://bit.ly/3uBNpYB>.

RELATED CONTENT

- **How to Use Content to Make Your Business More Findable on the Web [Article]** <https://bit.ly/3Bo6ykq>
- **Practical Ways to Use Content to Promote Yourself and Your Business [Article]** <https://bit.ly/373sGS6>
- **Physical Therapy Marketing Strategies: Being Seen, Being Found and Being Heard [Article]** <https://bit.ly/3kFxoGi>
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THE AUTHOR

Chris Dann is the founder of Market Your Clinic Online and is unreasonably passionate about digital healthcare marketing. He builds websites, carries out SEO optimisation, has written for Osteopathy Today, works with Physio First and Co-Kinetic and is the author of the Manual Therapy SEO Reference Guide. When not promoting clinics, he enjoys the gym, modern art, playing guitar and eating hamburgers.

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Market Your Clinic Online

Free Web Review

Understand your website and SEO opportunities with a Free Web Review. You might want to talk through some specific ideas – like a website redesign or how to rank higher on Google – ask some questions, or just see what we could suggest. We'll also produce some reports on your current website and SEO which are yours to keep.

There's no obligation, just a half-hour on Zoom to discuss the best ways to market your business.

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Who Are We?

At **Market Your Clinic Online** we are experts in websites and digital marketing services for physical therapy and Allied Health. Our marketing advice has been published in Osteopathy Today and we also work with Physio First to provide web and marketing advice to their members.

We specialise in small-to-medium practices who need quality services from a company who understands their needs and challenges. We've released how-to guides and case studies of our successes, and also publish the Manual Therapy SEO Reference Guide.

We pride ourselves in being honest and approachable, and in producing top-quality work that you can rely on. We're always happy to talk, so don't hesitate to get in touch.



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