



## Practice Owner Draws Patients with Unique Marketing Techniques

Before a patient leaves his office, Fortino Gonzalez draws them a picture. A physical therapist first and illustrator second (or third or fourth), Gonzalez prefers to go low tech in a day and age where digital tends to be the norm. But, the stick figures he sketches have become one of his most valuable marketing tools.

The simple characters show the exercises he would like his patients to use as part of their treatment.

“These drawings help establish a personal connection, which improves the therapeutic alliance,” he says. “I found early on that if you personalize a patient’s home program, their compliance improves.”

The illustrations are a key part of Gonzalez’s marketing strategy for McAllen Physical Therapy in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas.

While he relies on low-tech strategies to make a personal connection with his patients, he also turns to the mass marketing techniques of major brands for ideas on how to better broadcast his services.

From branded pens, stickers and cups to the mass distribution of McAllen Physical Therapy T-shirts, Gonzalez has dabbled in it all.

“You go into any major retail store and everywhere you turn, you’re going to see its name,” Gonzalez says. So, his practice name adorns the office interior ... right down to the upholstery on his treatment tables.

Patients also can’t help but see what the back pain specialist considers his unique selling point: The McKenzie Method® of Mechanical Diagnosis and Therapy® (MDT).

“It’s real simple,” Gonzalez says. “The more my patients see the words ‘McKenzie Method,’ the more likely they are to ask about it.

“It compels people to ask: What is MDT? What’s so different?” he says. And this opportunity to explain is a critical element in his marketing cycle.

The evidence-based MDT system begins with a thorough mechanical analysis to establish a "cause-and-effect" relationship between historical pain behavior as well as the response to repeated test movements, positions and activities.

A systematic progression of applied mechanical forces utilizes pain response to monitor changes in motion and function to classify the disorder. Clinicians then develop a treatment program that empowers patients to treat themselves when possible.

Once Gonzalez's patients are educated and successfully treated with MDT, they become his best form of advertising.

While McKenzie has allowed him to carve a strong niche in the Rio Grande Valley, Gonzalez recognizes that MDT alone doesn't fuel referrals.

"Few people come in asking for the McKenzie Method," Gonzalez says. "They come because they are hurting and in the process, they learn about the method.

"It's all about taking care of the person in front of you," he says.

So, while the signage and stick figure home exercise programs factor into his "ongoing experiment" of a marketing plan, the root of his branding is firmly planted in the McKenzie Method.

Gonzalez believes that taking the time to properly train his staff to be well informed about the McKenzie Method is essential. Any one of his staff members is capable of explaining the method to existing or prospective patients who call in. He also makes it a point to get right back to them personally and begin building a relationship.

"You 'see' your doctor. You 'see' your dentist," Gonzalez says. Physical therapists get a different rap than other health care providers. "A lot of people say 'I *did* physical therapy.'"

As in they "did" it and didn't get results. Gonzalez trusts MDT to get the best outcomes for his patients and works toward becoming "their physical therapist."

To learn more about the McKenzie Method and how it can draw more patients to your practice, visit [www.mckenzieinstituteusa.org](http://www.mckenzieinstituteusa.org).