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10 Steps to a Successful in-Home NIR Therapy Program (Pt. 1)

By **Rob Berman, MBA**

Peer-reviewed scientific studies over the past several decades show an impressively large list of health conditions that are amenable to NIR (near-infrared/red light) therapy. As a result, NIR therapy has

increasingly grown in popularity and acceptance in many health-related fields, where it has earned a place in clinics across the U.S.

Adding NIR therapy as a treatment option makes sense for acupuncturists as well, because by including NIR therapy on your

treatment menu, you can confidently offer patients a painless, simple, all-natural, non-invasive, highly effective, and risk-free treatment modality that triggers and supports the body's innate healing ability.

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positive relationship with these other practitioners can lead to great referrals and the opportunity to share your expertise with the greater medical community.


Getting Started: The best way to get the ball rolling is simply by asking your patients. Start with the providers your patients frequent and ask for an introduction. Let the practitioners know you accept new patients and have appointment openings. Remember to familiarize them with your areas of expertise, and always emphasize how you can complement their own practices.

The biggest key to building that relationship

is establishing trust from the very beginning. It may start with a phone call and an email introduction or an invitation to lunch. It is essential to communicate your ideal patient to them, so they know which patients to refer to your practice.

Another critical relationship is with other practitioner's office staff. Receptionists, nurses and office managers often function as physicians' gatekeepers. Frequently, *they* are the ones doing most of the referrals, so be sure to build trust and a positive relationship with them. And make sure you follow-up often to keep them updated with news from your

practice. When they do send a patient your way, show your appreciation by sending a personalized thank-you card.

Finally, remember that referrals are a two-way street, so recommend your own patients see other physicians when appropriate. They are there to complement your practice, too! 

Antonio Arias manages Holistic Billing (<https://holisticbillingservices.com>), a company with a focus on integrative health since 1999 and a goal to make insurance billing and medical documentation accessible to acupuncture practitioners.

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NIR therapy can be depended upon to bring effective pain relief and circulation support for a wide range of musculoskeletal issues, from sprains and strains to back pain, knee, hip, and joint issues, tennis elbow, whiplash, and carpal tunnel syndrome – and can even help reduce the painful symptoms of chronic conditions such as osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, peripheral neuropathy, tendinopathy, plantar fasciitis, and fibromyalgia. The bottom line is that NIR therapy can improve the quality of life for those suffering from a variety of minor to major health issues.

FREQUENT TREATMENT IS KEY

NIR therapy sessions usually last up to 20 minutes. For a minor condition, one or two sessions may be all that is needed for pain to subside and the issue to disappear. For acute conditions, a few days to a few weeks of NIR therapy sessions may be required.

However, in the case of chronic conditions, most practitioners who utilize NIR therapy have discovered that the key to successful results is a plan



of frequent treatments over a longer time span. For chronic conditions, daily therapy sessions (or a minimum of three sessions per week) for a number of weeks seem to be the most beneficial treatment plan for optimal results.

Dr. Steven Chalk is the owner of Freedom Clinic of Chiropractic in South Jordan, Utah. He uses NIR therapy to treat his patients with neuropathy. When asked how many treatment sessions it takes before the average neuropathy patient begins to see improvements, Dr. Chalk reports, “It is hard to say because it varies, but probably 30 daily treatments.”

IN-HOME TREATMENT

For some chronic-condition patients, having to

come in for office visits as often as is needed to achieve effective results is time-consuming, difficult and, depending upon the mileage required or other costs of transportation, expensive. (This is particularly problematic during COVID-19 restrictions.) As a result, this regimen may quickly get tedious and hard to maintain for these patients, especially if they have a demanding work schedule, are seniors and/or have mobility issues.

The answer to this problem is for acupuncturists to develop treatment programs that can be conducted in the convenience of the patient’s own home and on the patient’s own schedule.

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Because NIR therapy is so easy to administer, therapy sessions eventually can be performed by the patient on their own, or with the assistance of family members. Dr. Brian McKay, owner of Core Health in Darien, Conn., has his patients purchase an NIR therapy system to conduct their own daily treatment sessions at home. As he explains, “It is a passive type of treatment, so there’s no real reason why they cannot do it.”

STEPS TO A SUCCESSFUL IN-HOME PROGRAM

Practitioners have found the 10 steps listed below to be the key to successful in-home programs. Complete details about these 10 steps will appear in part 2 of this article (March digital issue).

1. Purchase and sell NIR therapy systems.
2. Explain NIR therapy to your patients.
3. Schedule regular office visits for therapy.
4. Assign monthly self-assessments.
5. Establish a realistic time frame.
6. Make NIR therapy sessions easy.

7. Provide diet and nutrition advice.
8. Make supplements part of your treatment protocol.
9. Encourage the patient to develop a regular exercise program.
10. Show interest and provide encouragement.

Note: Part 2 of this article will help you see why steps 7-9 are important aspects of getting patient buy-in for their in-home NIR therapy program.

HAPPY PATIENTS, HAPPY PRACTICE

Of course, the success of any in-home program ultimately depends upon the patient’s own efforts and diligence. But an educated patient who understands NIR therapy, and is knowledgeable about diet, nutrition and exercise, stands a much better chance of being invested in their own health enough to keep up the daily in-home NIR therapy sessions that are essential for effective results, especially with chronic conditions.

Over time, as results are gradually realized, the patient should be happy and satisfied with the

effectiveness of NIR therapy and dedicated to their in-home program. And a happy, satisfied patient leads to a loyal, long-time patient who becomes a walking testimonial for your professional care and clinic!

EDITOR’S NOTE: Part 2 of this article (March digital issue) discusses in detail each of the 10 steps to a successful in-home NIR therapy program.

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10 Steps to a Successful in-Home NIR Therapy Program (Pt. 2)

By **Rob Berman**, MBA

EDITOR'S NOTE: Part 1 of this article appeared as a digital exclusive in the **February issue**.

If you decide to put your chronic condition patients on an in-home near-infrared (NIR) / red light therapy program, the following 10 steps are absolutely essential for success:

1. SELL NIR THERAPY SYSTEMS

Make it easy and affordable for the patient to acquire their own NIR therapy system for in-home use by selling systems in your clinic. Offer several different shapes and sizes of therapy pads and boots so each patient can have a system with pads that effectively cover the area(s) where treatment is needed most. And if possible, offer a payment plan that will allow lower-income patients and seniors on fixed incomes to afford their own system. Having their own system at their disposal will help the patient, especially in regard to long-term maintenance therapy.

Selling systems in your clinic will not only be helpful and convenient for patients, but also provide additional revenue for your clinic, as manufacturers allow health practitioners to purchase systems at wholesale to resell at a profit.

2. EXPLAIN THE VALUE OF NIR THERAPY

In addition to teaching the patient how to use their system, explain what NIR therapy does and how it works. Make sure that the patient understands how it provides immediate as well as long-term benefits to their body; that it triggers the release of nitric oxide, ATP and other helpful chemicals at the cellular level that work to increase circulation, relieve pain and support their body's healing processes; and that the regeneration of nerves and tissues may indeed be possible over time.

If the patient has been educated to have a basic understanding of how NIR therapy is benefiting their body, then they will be more inclined to keep going with their in-home treatment sessions for the

duration of the time it takes to generate substantial improvements.

3. SCHEDULE REGULAR OFFICE VISITS

Schedule the patient for office visits on a regular basis to accelerate progress for their presenting condition. Explain to the patient that what you do for them in-clinic augments the benefits of their in-home program.

If they understand that NIR therapy is a passive treatment, while acupuncture is an active treatment – and that both treatment sessions are equally important to achieving results – then the patient should be happy to maintain their regular in-office visits.

4. ASSIGN MONTHLY SELF-ASSESSMENTS

Ask the patient to complete a detailed self-assessment at the beginning of each month for the first 3-4 months of their in-home treatment program. Have the patient answer questions pertaining to where they feel pain; the

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level of this pain; and what activities they have difficulties with and why.

As time passes and their pain decreases, the

patient can easily forget how they previously felt and what their daily life was like before NIR therapy brought pain relief and

other improvements. By reviewing previous self-assessments, the patient will be able to remember their former state and become more aware of the benefits they have received, including pain reduction and, especially with neuropathy patients, improvements in sensation, mobility and flexibility — and know that their in-home program is working.

5. SET A REALISTIC TIME FRAME

Give the patient a realistic time frame of when they may begin to experience results. Make sure the patient fully comprehends that the repair and rebuilding of damaged nerves and tissues is a slow and gradual process. A good rule of thumb is that the longer the patient has had their condition, the longer it will take to improve.

The patient should also understand that even after results are realized, regular maintenance treatments will be required in most cases to keep these improvements in place. If their expectations are realistic, then the patient will be less prone to become discouraged and dissatisfied while awaiting results.

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6. MAKE THERAPY SESSIONS EASY

Have the patient keep their NIR therapy system in an easy to-get-to and frequently used location – perhaps near their bed, couch or favorite chair. This positioning will make their therapy pads easy to pick up, plug in and place on their body while they rest, recline or sit watching television, reading, listening to music, or talking on the phone.

Some patients who work at home even do therapy sessions while on the job, finding this decreases stress. If NIR therapy can be associated with relaxation, it will make the therapy session much easier to remember to do each day.

7. GIVE DIET AND NUTRITION ADVICE

Provide the patient with handouts on which foods to eat and which foods to avoid, tailoring your diet guidelines to their specific health condition(s). For example, if the patient is diabetic or prediabetic, give them diet suggestions that will help keep their blood sugar levels stabilized. In particular, give the patient a list of foods that help increase their body's nitric oxide production: beets

and beet greens, arugula, spinach, Swiss chard, celery, watermelon, pomegranate, parsley, citrus, and walnuts.


8. MAKE SUPPLEMENTS PART OF YOUR TREATMENT PROTOCOL

Along with acupuncture and NIR therapy, recommend vitamin, mineral and herbal supplements as an integral part of your in-home treatment program. Educate the patient regarding beneficial vitamins, minerals and herbs that will help alleviate their specific condition. Develop different handouts that pertain to supplements for common chronic conditions that you may treat, such as back pain, arthritis and neuropathy. Selling supplements in-clinic will make it convenient for the patient to obtain them, plus provide an additional revenue stream for your clinic.

9. ADVOCATE EXERCISE

Educate the patient on the importance of regular exercise. Provide a handout containing diagrams of simple exercises with instructions that are appropriate for their age range and health issue(s).

10. SHOW INTEREST AND ALWAYS GIVE ENCOURAGEMENT

Last, but not least, always ask the patient how their in-home therapy is coming along and what improvements they are experiencing. If you inquire about their therapy, encourage them and show you are interested in their progress; this will give the patient the emotional support they need to help them stick with their in-home program. What's more, they will be excited to share their treatment results with you during office visits. 

Rob Berman is a partner at Energia Medical, LLC, a national distributor of light therapy pads and controllers. He helps health care providers improve patient outcomes while increasing provider income. Rob has held a variety of sales and marketing positions during his career, which include building and managing a marketing department, directing product development and product management for multiple organizations, and serving as a general manager for a variety of business units. He can be contacted by phone at 860-707-4220 or by e-mail at rob@energiamedical.com. Energia Medical's website is www.energiamedical.com.