

● THE PATIENT ACQUISITION PLAYBOOK

Be the clinic **patients trust** and choose.

A practical guide for clinics and health providers that want to be found, earn patients' trust and turn research into booked appointments.



Brandon Delardes
Founder & Director, Base Digital

Seen. Trusted. Chosen.

Care.

● MEDICAL & HEALTH WHITEPAPER

The Patient Acquisition Playbook

How patients research and choose a health provider today, and a practical plan to reach them at every stage, from first search to booked appointment, within the rules that apply to health advertising.



Brandon Delardes, Founder, Base Digital · Brisbane · Published October 2026

INSIDE THIS PLAYBOOK

1. How patients choose a provider
2. The patient journey, stage by stage
3. Five foundations of patient acquisition
4. A 12-month patient acquisition calendar
5. Advertising within the rules
6. Measuring what matters
7. The 20-point patient acquisition checklist

1. How patients choose a provider

Choosing a health provider is personal. Patients are often worried, sometimes in pain, and want to feel confident they are in safe, qualified hands. For elective and specialist procedures, the decision can take months.

That research now happens largely online. Before a patient calls your reception, they have usually searched their symptoms or procedure, compared clinics near them, read reviews, checked practitioners' qualifications and, increasingly, asked an AI assistant such as ChatGPT or Google's AI Overviews who to see.

The short version: by the time a patient enquires, they have usually decided who they trust. Your marketing has to be visible, accurate and credible long before the first phone call.

Referred patients and direct patients

Many health providers see two kinds of patients, and each needs a different approach.

- **Referred patients** arrive with a GP or other practitioner's recommendation, but most still look you up before booking. They want reassurance, practical details and an easy way to make an appointment.
- **Direct patients** find you themselves, often through search, AI assistants, social media or word of mouth. They compare more options and need clearer answers about services, practitioners, costs and process.
- **Referrers** are an audience too. Clear information for GPs and other practitioners about your services, referral process and practitioners makes referring to you easier.

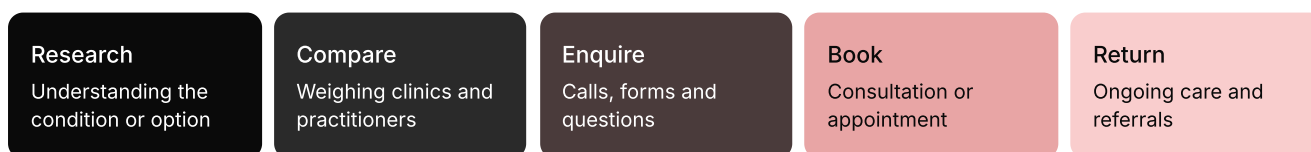
Where patients research

Patients move between channels constantly. The clinics that grow are consistent and credible everywhere patients look.

CHANNEL	WHAT PATIENTS USE IT FOR
Google search	Symptoms, treatments, costs, practitioners and clinics near them.
Google Maps and Business Profile	Finding a nearby clinic, checking hours, directions, phone and reviews.
AI assistants	Asking what a procedure involves, or which clinics and specialists to consider.
Your website	The deciding resource. Patients judge clarity, credentials and how easy it is to book.
Social media	Getting a feel for the clinic, team and approach to care.
Referrals and word of mouth	Trusted recommendations from GPs, practitioners, family and friends.

2. The patient journey, stage by stage

Mapping the journey makes it clear what patients need at each point, which channels matter, and what to measure.



STAGE	WHAT PATIENTS NEED	KEY CHANNELS	MEASURE
Research	Clear, accurate information about conditions, treatments and what to expect.	SEO, AI search, content	Organic visits, AI mentions, branded searches
Compare	Practitioner credentials and experience, location, costs, wait times and process.	Website, Google Business Profile, Google Ads	Profile actions, practitioner page views
Enquire	Easy ways to call, ask a question or check availability, with a prompt response.	Website, phone, Google Ads, remarketing	Calls, form enquiries, cost per enquiry
Book	A simple booking process, clear preparation information and reminders.	Online booking, email, SMS	Bookings, attendance rate
Return	Continuity of care, useful follow-up and a reason to come back or recommend you.	Email, Google reviews, social	Return visits, new reviews

3. Five foundations of patient acquisition

Before adding more campaigns or budget, make sure these five foundations are in place. Each one makes every other channel work harder.

01 A website that explains and reassures

Give each service, condition and practitioner its own clear page. Explain what's involved, who it suits, costs where possible and how to book. Keep it fast on mobile, where most patients research.

02 Visible expertise and credentials

Show who is behind your care: qualifications, registration, experience and areas of focus. Have clinical content written or reviewed by qualified practitioners and say so. This builds the experience, expertise and trust that Google and AI assistants look for.

03 Local visibility for every clinic

A complete Google Business Profile, an individual location page and consistent name, address and phone details for every site, so each clinic shows up for patients nearby.

04 A frictionless enquiry and booking flow

Make calling, enquiring and booking obvious on every page. Respond quickly, confirm clearly and remind patients before appointments.

05 Measurement from search to booking

Track calls, forms and online bookings back to their source and service, so you know which channels bring in patients and can invest with confidence.

4. A 12-month patient acquisition calendar

Patient acquisition works best as an always-on presence with planned pushes for priority services. Adapt this outline to your own services, locations and capacity.

ALWAYS ON · ALL YEAR

SEO and content updates, AI search visibility, Google Business Profile posts and review responses, search ads for core services and brand terms, and remarketing to recent website visitors.

QUARTER 1 · PLAN AND FIX FOUNDATIONS

Audit your website, profiles and tracking. Confirm priority services and locations, check content against advertising guidelines and set targets based on your capacity.

QUARTER 2 · BUILD DEPTH

Expand service, condition and practitioner pages. Add FAQs and schema. Check how AI assistants describe your clinic and correct inconsistencies across directories.

QUARTER 3 · GROW PRIORITY SERVICES

Run focused campaigns for services with capacity, such as a new practitioner, a new location or a specialist procedure. Nurture longer decisions with helpful information and information evenings.

SEASONAL MOMENTS

Plan around the times demand shifts in your field, such as winter illness, end-of-year insurance and health fund timing, or school holidays for elective procedures.

QUARTER 4 · REVIEW AND PLAN

Review enquiries, bookings and cost per patient by service, channel and location. Keep what worked, cut what didn't, and set next year's plan and budget.

Specialist procedures and multi-location clinics

- **Long consideration.** For procedures such as laser eye surgery, patients research for weeks or months. Be visible early, answer the detailed questions and offer a low-pressure next step, such as a suitability assessment or information session.
- **Every location counts.** Treat each clinic as its own local business in search, with its own profile, page, reviews and campaign budget.

5. Advertising within the rules

In Australia, advertising a regulated health service must follow the National Law and Ahpra's advertising guidelines. These rules apply to websites, social media, search ads, Google Business Profiles and AI-facing content, not just traditional ads. Compliance should be part of how you plan and write every campaign, not a check at the end.

- **No testimonials about clinical aspects of care.** Reviews and stories that talk about clinical outcomes or treatment can't be used in your advertising. Focus on service, access and the patient experience in ways the guidelines allow.
- **No false, misleading or deceptive claims.** Be accurate about what a treatment involves, who it suits and its risks. Avoid words like "best", "guaranteed" or "painless" unless you can genuinely support them.
- **No unreasonable expectations.** Don't imply results are certain or typical, and be careful with before-and-after imagery.
- **No pressure to use services unnecessarily.** Be cautious with discounts, gifts and time-limited offers, and state any terms clearly.
- **Accurate credentials.** Use titles and qualifications correctly, including when describing practitioners as specialists.

Please note: this is a general summary, not legal advice. Other rules can also apply, such as consumer law and therapeutic goods advertising, and some services have additional guidance. Read Ahpra's current guidelines and check with your own advisers or professional body if you're unsure.

6. Measuring what matters

Focus on a small set of metrics that connect marketing activity to booked appointments.

METRIC	WHY IT MATTERS
Calls and enquiries by source	Shows which channels bring patients into your pipeline.
Bookings by service and location	Your clearest signal of real demand where you have capacity.
Cost per enquiry and per booking	Compares channels fairly and guides where to spend.
Enquiry-to-booking rate	Reveals whether follow-up and booking flow are losing patients.
Google Business Profile actions	Calls, directions and website clicks for each clinic.
Branded search and AI mentions	Early signs that awareness and reputation are growing.

7. The 20-point patient acquisition checklist

Work through this list. Anything you can't tick is an opportunity.

CHECK	AREA
1 Calling, enquiring and booking are easy on every page	Website
2 Each service and condition has its own clear page	Website
3 Each practitioner has a profile with qualifications and experience	Website

	CHECK	AREA
4	The website is fast and easy to use on mobile	Website
5	Every clinic has a complete Google Business Profile	Local
6	Every clinic has its own location page	Local
7	Clinic details match across directories and listings	Local & AI
8	Key pages answer common questions in the first few sentences	Search & AI
9	Clinical content is reviewed by a qualified practitioner	Search & AI
10	Medical organisation, practitioner and FAQ schema are in place	Search & AI
11	You've checked how ChatGPT and Google's AI describe your clinic	AI
12	Ads and pages are checked against Ahpra's advertising guidelines	Compliance
13	No clinical testimonials appear in your advertising	Compliance
14	Priority services have their own campaigns and landing pages	Campaigns
15	Remarketing reaches patients still researching	Campaigns
16	Every enquiry is answered within one business day	Follow-up
17	Patients receive confirmations and reminders before appointments	Follow-up
18	Calls, forms and bookings are tracked by source	Measurement
19	You ask "How did you hear about us?" on every new patient	Measurement
20	Results are reviewed by service and location every quarter	Measurement

WORK WITH BASE DIGITAL

Want to know where your clinic stands?

Base Digital is an independent, owner-led Brisbane digital marketing agency. We help clinics and health providers get found, earn trust and attract more patients. We'll review your clinic against this checklist and show you the biggest opportunities, with no lock-in contracts and no hard sell.

calendly.com/base-digital
hello@basedigital.com.au

0401 048 471

36 Warry Street, Fortitude Valley QLD