

# When a Big Name Isn't Enough

By Rhoda Weiss



**Hopkins, Mayo, Mass General,** Cleveland Clinic, MD Anderson and Sloan-Kettering. Some entities are so well-known that abbreviated versions of their names are enough to evoke instant recognition. Like Harvard, Yale, Princeton, UCLA and Stanford universities, national healthcare reputations can translate into scores of patients lining up for appointments. At least that's the perception.

The reality is sometimes different.

On paper, Mayo Clinic Florida in Jacksonville appears to have it all. After 20 years in the market, community image studies demonstrate strong name recognition and reputation as a premier, world class medical center. The area's population continues to grow as insurance plan participation expands. Jacksonville, Florida's most populous city and the 12th most populated in the nation, is also the biggest city in land area in the contiguous United States.

Much of Mayo's marketing centered on word-of-mouth with little spent on advertising and other more expensive methods. Yet, despite the internationally known brand, patients were not breaking down doors to access care delivered by Mayo's physicians and outpatient services. The reputation was instead juxtaposed by a widespread perception

that Mayo Clinic was not accessible to the average local resident. In addition, the regional provider market had been competitive for years, even before Mayo's arrival.

"Preliminary qualitative research showed local residents believed Mayo Clinic Florida catered primarily to out-of-town patients with serious illnesses that other hospitals could not diagnose or treat," explains Kevin Punskey, Mayo Clinic Florida's external communications manager. "To learn more, a phone survey of 700 households helped us

Potential patients were identified through research as people who do their homework on medical services providers and want the best care available to them. Existing patients, the general public and news media were also included. Here are the results:

- **Research news.** Increased local visibility of Mayo's research and clinic trials was accomplished through 22 news releases on research studies, unique surgical procedures and scientific breakthroughs.

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establish a baseline of the community's image, preferences and factors that influence the likelihood of local consumers to use Mayo Clinic."

With Mayo's new Florida hospital opening in the spring of 2008 on the same campus as its clinic and research facility in Jacksonville, the need for action was evident.

### A New Course

A campaign called "Charting a New Course" was implemented throughout 2008 to reposition Mayo Clinic Florida in the market, build local preference and increase appointments with physicians.

Using proactive media relations, major strategies were addressed. These included conducting at least five local editorial board meetings and increasing earned media coverage by 10 percent over the previous year. It also called for an increase in the number of survey respondents that said they had "read, seen or heard things about Mayo Clinic from news stories" and increase appointment requests by 10 percent over 2007.

- **Feature news.** Ongoing clinical feature stories targeted areas of excellence like cancer, cardiovascular, neurology and transplant services.
- **Television.** An ongoing relationship with local news stations offered Mayo physicians an opportunity to share their expertise during bi-monthly consumer health segments.
- **Community news.** Mayo tapped the media to heighten awareness of its expertise in breast cancer research and efforts to reduce health disparities for cancer care among diverse populations.
- **Editorial.** A dozen editorial briefings with editors and reporters focused on strengthening relationships with these influencers.
- **Hospital promotion.** The opening of Mayo's new hospital on its Florida campus resulted in extensive local print and broadcast coverage.

Punsky calls the campaign a “tremendous success, far exceeding our objectives.” In 2008, Mayo generated 1,050 news stories, nearly doubling coverage from the previous year and tripling media hits from 2006. This was reflected in nine front-page print stories, 162 broadcast segments and 19 editorials.

A follow-up survey showed respondents indicating that they had “read, seen or heard things about Mayo Clinic from news stories” increasing to 67 percent in 2008 from 35 percent in 2007—12 percent over the goal. Most important, the campaign contributed to a 26 percent growth in appointment requests in 2008 compared with 2007—16 percent more than its goal.

Impressive results required minimal expenditures. While many marketing and communications professionals continue to spend heavily on advertising

and other marketing techniques, Mayo Clinic Florida did it the old-fashioned and new-fashioned way. With the campaign conducted by an internal staff of two, the only expenditure was \$2,000 for the media research component. For this small investment, Mayo secured \$13 million in publicity value of its media stories; demonstrated substantial increases in community knowledge about the clinic, hospital and research; and welcomed scores of new patients to its clinic and new hospital. Mayo also leveraged social media with a YouTube Channel, Facebook page, LinkedIn, Twitter and the new patient blog, Sharing MayoClinic.

While competition remains fierce, Mayo and other local health providers are working together to convert Jacksonville into a medical destination through a campaign dubbed “America’s

Health Center.” Providers have joined with Jacksonville Visitors and Convention Bureau to build national and international awareness of the seaside city as an ideal location for health- and medical-related services, meetings and business opportunities. [MHS](#)



**About the Author**

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