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CANBERRA SPINE CENTRE | DR JON POWDERLY

How to Write an Article for Facebook

WHY ARE WE WRITING?

In this article you're going to learn how to write something for our community that captures attention quickly, helps your audience and engages them. Remember, the purpose of our writing is to help members of our community in our own unique way. When we do this with quality articles, on a regular basis, we build TRUST. We are writing to help educate them to understand and KNOW their own problems better. As we build trust with our community and online audience, without selling to them, they begin to LIKE what we do. When people in our community learn about us and like the way we do things, when it comes time to make a decision about their health care, they are more likely to choose us, or to recommend us to people in need that they know. This is the marketing principle of building 'know, like and trust' with those we can help.

EXPRESS YOUR INDIVIDUALITY, BUT FOLLOW THE FORMULA

As chiropractors, we share a common philosophy, but each express that slightly differently. That's a great thing in a multi-practitioner clinic - we want to encourage that, not quash it. When you write, do it from your heart. Imagine you are sitting having a coffee with a patient and you are helping them understand something. Get excited. Use simple language. Don't be dry and scientific. Put simply, write as you really are and as you speak.

While you're being yourself, you also want to be an EFFECTIVE communicator. No point in writing accurate, helpful material that people for some reason won't want to read. So let's go through **8 tips for writing in a way that your audience will want to read**. To illustrate the process, we're going to put together an article on headaches together.

1. WRITE ABOUT WHAT YOUR AUDIENCE WANTS TO HEAR.

Enter the conversation they are already having in their mind and focus on connecting with their problems/questions first. For instance, you might be really excited about central sensitisation and its role in chronic and severe pain. Writing a page or two on this topic might really turn your crank but will probably confuse and bore the pants off your lay audience.

So, headaches. What are the concerns, worries and questions that people have? How about these:

- What is causing my headaches?
 - Do I have a brain tumour?
- What can I do to prevent headaches?
- How do I know if my headache is serious?
- What is the most effective treatment for headaches?
- Is a neck problem causing my headaches?

These are the types of things that people type into Google. It's easy to make the mistake of writing in a way or about things that interest yourself (I've spent years doing this!). Switch this around and write about what your audience is asking for.

I'm sure you can think of some more, but let's go with the last one for our article.

2. PICK A TITLE THAT IS CATCHY.

You are only a thumb swipe away from being ignored. Imagine that everyone in your audience has ADHD. They're not going to read through pages of stuff to finally stumble upon something that interests them. Headlines in newspapers are big and so are the pictures because that's what grabs attention and if you succeed they will read/watch more. The nature of the internet encourages readers to flick over to another page if they are not engaged QUICKLY. So a catchy title is essential – how can you describe what you are about to say in a way that piques their interest? Really, it's a line that resembles something they are already asking/concerned about.

We could write:

'The neurological basis for head pain of cervical origin'

OR

'Is a Neck Problem Causing my Headaches?'

Which one is going to attract the attention of a lay person worried about headaches? You got it – the first one is great for nerds (us!); the second will appeal to a lay person.

3. START WITH A BANG, NOT A WHIMPER

Now that you've got a great title, don't stop! Keep your audience engaged in the first few sentences so that they want to keep reading. Traditionally, writers have a tendency to build the story slowly to a crescendo, delivering the most exciting, compelling or at least explanatory stuff at the end. If we do that with our online audience, they are likely to skip your beautiful story and move on.

So the next thing to do is almost a subtitle – a catchy phrase or sentence that starts off with a bang, and makes it hard not to keep on reading. Then bring forward your summary (the one you were going to leave at the end) to let your audience know what you're going to cover.

Let's try it:

It has been estimated that up to 53% of people suffer 'cervicogenic' headaches during their lives. Every week at Canberra Spine Centre we see people with headaches caused by a neck problem. In this article, you'll learn answers to the following questions:

- What is cervicogenic headache?
- How can neck pain cause headaches?
- How do I know if I have cervicogenic headache?
- What is the treatment for cervicogenic headache?

Cervicogenic headache is probably more common than most people think. Its prevalence is likely under-reported due to people not recognising the problem for what it is (ie poor musculoskeletal diagnostic skills of many health care practitioners). After reading this article, you'll be more prepared to know what it is and what to do about it.

4. THE MOST INTERESTING STUFF 'ABOVE THE FOLD'.

You may have heard this expression, 'above the fold'. It relates to the good old days of newspapers (especially broadsheets, the big ones that take up the whole table at a café), where you would fold over the paper to read the top half first. Anything on the bottom half, below the 'fold' would be much less likely to be noticed, and thus much less attractive to advertisers. 'Above the fold' positions on the paper would be the opposite.

The same thing happens now on a screen. When you're reading, the first few paragraphs that show up before you have to scroll down are going to be what people will scan through. If you catch the attention of you audience then and there, they might just keep on reading. If you leave your interesting (to them) stuff below the fold, they are likely to skip it and move onto something else.

The 80/20 rule applies here in that at least 80% of viewers will never read more than 20% of the article. This is okay, as for marketing we don't want everyone, we only want the audience who have an affinity with your topic. Really this is doing what we talked about in point 3 - start with a bang, but

I'd like to add a couple of extra points:

- Make sure you are writing just about what they are concerned about and most interested in hearing.
- Now is not the time for going into great detail about anything.
- Now is not the time to be mentioning anything about your position (your opinion, method or philosophy). Leave that 'till the end.

5. DELIVER YOUR CONTENT IN AN EASY TO READ, UNDERSTAND AND ABSORB FASHION.

Now to the guts of your article. Expand on your summary points (remember, from the front or your article, not at the end), remembering who you are writing for. Ask yourself these questions when you write:

- Who am I writing for? (a general member of the community who is looking for answers to their questions, not researching for a thesis on headaches)
 - What sort of questions are they asking?
 - What are they most worried or concerned about?
 - What are the answers they are looking for?
- What is it that they don't know, that if they did, would make a real difference in their life?

Then write in a way that will deliver what your audience wants. Remember to keep it simple. If you want to use technical jargon (Personally, I like to be as accurate as I can, not dumbing it down too much), just make sure you explain what you mean.

6. GIVE VALUE

The articles are about providing help and value to our audience. In the old days, marketing was purely a message to 'buy my stuff'. With the marketplace flooded with advertising messages now, people are switching off or putting up their barriers to these sales messages. We need to first build trust with our audience before we try to sell them our message in any way.

Value could be any one or more of the following:

- Some tips on how to avoid
- Exercises to help with ...
- Setting up your workstation to prevent ...
- How to recognise the signs of ...
- Are you at risk of ...
- How to reduce your chances of ...

Once again, you'll have some more ways of helping answer questions and alleviating the concerns of your audience. Choose one and deliver. Leave your audience feeling thankful that they came across our page, wanting to find out more, and wanting to pass this stuff onto their friends and family.

In the case of our article, we'll be answering a simple question:

How do I Know if I Have a Cervicogenic Headache?

Cervicogenic headache will tend to have the following qualities:

- The headache tends to develop at the same time as the neck problem. You may have neck pain accompanying your headache, or a silent neck dysfunction causing your pain.*
- Pain is often on one side, starting at the back of the head and moving to the temples, behind the eyes or the forehead.*
- Pain is generally deep, non-throbbing, moderate to severe and constant, but may be intermittent.*
- Pain can be triggered by certain neck movements or positions.*
- There may be 'trigger points' (tender points in the muscles that are tender when pressed and may reproduce the headache) in the upper cervical spine.*
- Range of motion of the cervical spine is often reduced (ie you can't turn or bend your head to the side evenly).*
- Joint motion in the upper 3 cervical vertebrae will be blocked or uneven. Chiropractors call this a 'subluxation'.*

7. GIVE THEM A TASTE OF WHAT CANBERRA SPINE CENTRE OFFERS

In point 4, we said NOT to mention anything about your position early on. 80% of your article should be reserved for the needs, concerns and questions your audience has. The last 20% or so can be stating your position. This can be something quickly saying, 'and by the way, we can help with that....'.

Here's our we can do it for our headache article:

Seeing an expert in spinal care would be the first step. Proper diagnosis ensures that you don't receive the wrong treatment (eg. medication for a cervicogenic headache), and that appropriate care is given. Chiropractors are experts in diagnosis and management of spine-related conditions.

Chiropractors use gentle spinal manipulation and soft tissue techniques to help restore proper motion to the spine, thus restoring proper nerve function. When the nerves are no longer irritated, problems such as cervicogenic headaches tend to resolve.

At Canberra Spine Centre, we help people with headaches every day to recover normal function and to feel great again.

From an AHPRA point of view, we're choosing solid topics/conditions for which chiropractic has a solid track record and research backing.

Nonetheless, care must be taken to avoid the following:

- Words or phrases such as 'cure', 'always', 'improve overall health and wellbeing', 'prevent illness and disease'. While some of these are part of our everyday experience, we cannot say those things in public (!). Better to state facts and allow the audience to draw its own conclusions.
- Comparisons of treatment effectiveness between professions.
- Anything that causes fear or encourages people to seek care without a clear reason.

8. SIGN OFF AND INVITE FURTHER INTERACTION

If they get all the way to the end of your article, well done! You must have written something interesting and engaging. Now, implicitly, you have permission to gently give them your details and encourage them to enquire about an appointment or visit our Facebook page or website for more information. Not salesy, just a gentle invitation. This is the only part in which we write the SAME THING EACH TIME. Signing off in the same way each time ensures that we don't miss important information at this point. Here's how it looks for our headache article:

If you have (headaches) and you're not sure what to do about them, please call us on (02) 6257 9400. If you would like some more information about the spine and nervous system and how it relates to your health, please check out the other articles on our Facebook page or go to our website: www.spinecentre.com.au. Make sure to have a look at the interesting articles on many aspects of health we post on Facebook each week.

We put in the area code above in case people call from a distance (they will!). If not, they will be bothering someone from their local area! We may not be able to have them as a patient but may be able to help them in some other way (eg. put them in touch with a good local chiropractor).

So that's the 8 tips for writing in a way that will engage your audience. Here are the next steps:

1. Email to Beck so that format can be changed to suit Facebook.

2. Record a short video to accompany the article. An 'interview' style is probably the easiest (most fun, least awkward) and most watchable way to do it. See the next article on 'How to make a video to accompany your Facebook article'.

3. Add images (or instructions for Beck to find and insert them - she's awesome at this) to accompany the version of your article that will go onto the website. In image at the top that grabs attention and one or two others through the article to help illustrate your points can be effective. The article that gets posted on our website will have a very different format, allowing for more visuals, font and layout variation than the Facebook one.

Now we're done. Here's the finished product we would email to Beck:

IS A NECK PROBLEM CAUSING MY HEADACHES?

(picture of someone with headache - perhaps red area like in Nurofen picture)

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- What is cervicogenic headache?
- How can neck pain cause headaches?
- How do I know if I have cervicogenic headache?
- What is the treatment for cervicogenic headache?

Cervicogenic headache is probably more common than most people think. Its prevalence is likely under-reported due to people not recognising the problem for what it is (ie poor musculoskeletal diagnostic skills of some many health care practitioners). After reading this article, you'll be more prepared to know what it is and what to do about it.

What is 'Cervicogenic Headache'?

This is the name given to headaches caused by problems with soft tissue (mainly muscles, ligaments and tendons) and other structures in the neck. Generally, something going wrong with the joints between the upper three cervical vertebrae and skull are to blame.

How Can a Headache be Caused by Something in my Neck?

(picture of nerves in head and neck - stylised, not anatomical)

In years gone by, chiropractors were ridiculed for suggesting that neck problems could be the cause of headaches. Modern science, with all its wonderful diagnostic and imaging gizmos have caught up in recent decades, and now it is common knowledge that problems in the cervical spine can cause headaches. How exactly does this happen? In the same way that referred pain is caused in other areas of the body (eg. sciatica), nerves from the neck communicate with cranial nerves that supply skin of the face and head. These nerves converge in something called the 'trigeminocervical nucleus', passing information up to the brain that gives the impression that the problem is somewhere in the head, when the source of the problem is actually the neck.

How do I Know if I Have a Cervicogenic Headache?

Cervicogenic headache will tend to have the following qualities:

- The headache tends to develop at the same time as the neck problem. You may have neck pain accompanying your headache, or a silent neck dysfunction causing your pain.
- Pain is often on one side, starting at the back of the head and moving to the temples, behind the eyes or the forehead.
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 - Pain can be triggered by certain neck movements or positions.
- There may be 'trigger points' (tender points in the muscles that are tender when pressed and may reproduce the headache) in the upper cervical spine.
- Range of motion of the cervical spine is often reduced (ie you can't turn or bend your head to the side evenly).
- Joint motion in the upper 3 cervical vertebrae will be blocked or uneven. Chiropractors call this a 'subluxation'.

What is the Treatment for a Cervicogenic Headache?

(picture of someone - chiro - with hands on the patient's neck/head)

Like any health issue, the most effective treatment is looking to the cause and then restoring proper function where it has been lost. In the case of cervicogenic headache, the cause lies in the cervical spine and the related structures. More specifically, joints that have lost their normal range of motion will become damaged, inflamed and irritate the nerves that lead to the head.

Seeing an expert in spinal care would be the first step. Proper diagnosis ensures that you don't receive the wrong treatment (eg. medication for a cervicogenic headache), and that appropriate care is given. Chiropractors are experts in diagnosis and management of spine-related conditions.

Chiropractors use gentle spinal manipulation and soft tissue techniques to help restore proper motion to the spine, thus restoring proper nerve function.

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If you have (headaches) and you're not sure what to do about them, please call us on (02) 6257 9400. If you would like some more information about the spine and nervous system and how it relates to your health, please check out the other articles on our Facebook page or go to our website:

www.spinecentre.com.au. Also, make sure you read the other interesting articles we post on headaches this month.