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Tips for Writing Referral Letters

1. Be brief.

Stick to one page. Everyone is busy and appreciates brevity.

2. Be personal.

Greet them by their names and add a sentence about your visit, conversation or something about them. Include your photo. Write in your own words and tone. Inject your personality as appropriate.

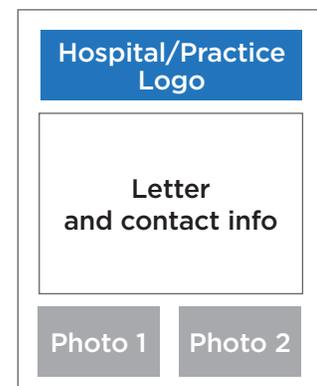
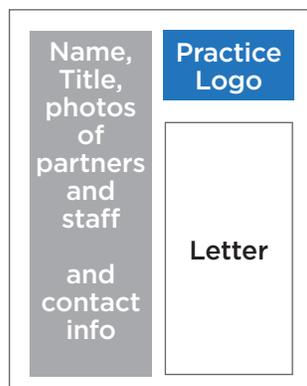
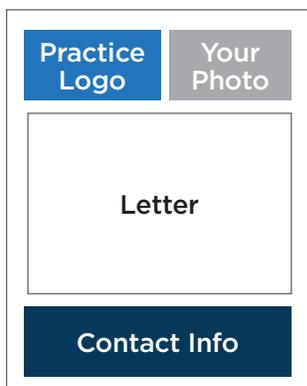
3. Be relevant.

Tell them what they want to know from you: why you offer *da Vinci*® Surgery, your experience, procedures you offer, patient selection criteria, and patient benefits – including highlights of your clinical outcomes.

4. Be consistent.

One letter won't build a relationship. Send a letter, a quick update, a thank you note... to keep your name top of mind. Most importantly, send the referring physician an easy-to-read post-op report for each patient and the report should arrive before the patient does.

Letter Layout Ideas



Sample Referral Letters from Surgeons

Sample 1: Letter After a Personal Visit from a Surgeon

Dear Dr. _____,

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me last week. I truly enjoyed our conversation. As discussed, I am a board certified [specialty] surgeon and have been in practice in XYZ-city/county for XX years. I want to share with you the exciting advances in robotic-assisted surgery.

Speaking from my experience, patients receiving minimally invasive surgery from me has gone from X% to Y% since I incorporated *da Vinci* Surgery into my practice. During a *da Vinci* procedure, I am 100% in control of the *da Vinci* System, which translates my hand movements into small, precise movements of the tiny instruments. This state of the art surgical system features high-definition 3D visualization with *EndoWrist*® instruments, allowing me to operate with enhanced vision, control and precision.

I have performed over XXX *da Vinci* procedures for patients with a wide range of [specialty] disorders including [insert patient diseases/conditions that apply to your practice]. The outcomes I have noticed from my patients who had *da Vinci* Surgery include [insert patient benefits from your own experience with *da Vinci* Surgery]. About XX% of my patients return home on day X after surgery.

I continue to offer the full range of [specialty] care including [insert other procedures and services you offer]. My attitude/approach to [insert your opinion/approach to procedures or screenings, such as for hernia repair, hysterectomy, prolapse repair, partial nephrectomy, PSA screening, and etc..]. Each patient should learn about all non-surgical and surgical options available, including if and which minimally invasive surgery option is appropriate. I want to work with you to make this possible for your patients. Only a well-informed patient can choose the most appropriate option given his/her situation.

If you have any questions or would like to schedule a patient consultation, please call me directly or contact my office. We pride ourselves in fast and smooth scheduling and will keep you informed perioperatively. I look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

[Surgeon's name, title]

[Surgeon's cell phone]

[Office phone/fax and referral coordinator's name]

[Insert Important Safety Information - see last page]

Sample Referral Letters from Surgeons

Sample 2: Introduction Letter from Surgeons

Dear Dr. _____,

We would like to introduce ourselves and share with you some exciting advances in robotic-assisted surgery in [specialty]. We are Drs. [insert surgeon names], board certified [specialty] surgeons at [insert practice name] in XYZ-city/county. Together, we have performed XXX procedures with a minimally invasive approach over the past XX years/decades.

During a *da Vinci*® procedure, the surgeon is 100% in control of the *da Vinci* System, which offers high definition 3D views and translates our hand movements into small, precise movements of the advanced *EndoWrist*® instruments. That means we have enhanced vision, dexterity and precision and our patients experience [insert patient benefits you have tracked and seen from your *da Vinci* patients].

Types of patients we offer *da Vinci* Surgery to include:

- [insert patient diseases/conditions that apply to your practice]
- [insert patient diseases/conditions that apply to your practice]
- [insert patient diseases/conditions that apply to your practice]

Our most notable robotic-assisted procedures are XXX cases of [insert names of procedures that you are most experienced in and want to attract most referrals for].

If you have any questions or would like to schedule a patient consultation, please contact us directly or call our office. We work with our staff to ensure that patients are scheduled quickly and you are kept informed. Your patients will be returned to you once postoperative care is complete. We look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

[Names/titles of surgeons]

[Cell phone numbers]

[Office phone/fax and referral coordinator's name]

[Insert Important Safety Information - see last page]

Sample Referral Letters from Surgeons

Sample 3: Invitation Letter to a Mixer, Meet-n-Greet, Grand Round, or Seminar

Dear Dr. _____,

My name is [insert surgeon names]. I am a board certified [specialty] surgeon at [insert practice name] in XYZ-city/county and perform surgery at [insert hospital name].

I would like to personally invite you to attend [insert event type: a physician mixer, breakfast meet-n-greet, Grand Round, or seminar] to share the latest advances in minimally invasive surgery. We have seen a growing number of patients with [conditions] asking about robotic-assisted surgery. I want to share my experience and how I consult patients about surgical and non-surgical treatment options.

[Insert event title]

Location:

Date: **Time:**

RSVP by [insert deadline]: [insert email/phone/fax and coordinator's name]

[Clarify if breakfast/lunch/dinner/refreshments will be served. Experience a hands-on "test drive" of the *da Vinci*® Surgical System.]

Each patient should learn about all non-surgical and surgical options available, including if and which minimally invasive surgery option is appropriate. I'd like to work with you to make this possible for your patients. Only a well-informed patient can choose the most appropriate option given his/her situation.

If you have any questions or would like to meet with me prior to this, please contact me directly or call my office. We look forward to seeing you on [insert date of event]!

Sincerely,

[Surgeon's name, title]

[Surgeon's cell phone]

[Office phone/fax and referral coordinator's name]

[Insert Important Safety Information - see last page]

About [insert your name]

[Insert your brief bio, including a list of *da Vinci* procedures you offer and total number of cases to date]

***da Vinci* Surgery and Potential Patient Benefits**

During a *da Vinci* procedure, the surgeon is 100% in control of the *da Vinci* System, which offers high definition 3D views and translates his/her hand movements into small, precise movements of the advanced *EndoWrist*® instruments. That enables the surgeon to operate with enhanced vision, control and precision.

Potential Patient Benefits* of *da Vinci* Surgery vs. open surgery include:

- Shorter hospital stay¹⁻⁵
- Less blood loss^{2-4,6}
- Fewer complications^{2-4,7-8}
- Faster recovery^{1-2,11-12}
- Smaller incisions associated with minimal scarring^{3,6-7}
- Less need for narcotic pain medicine^{1,7,9-10}

*Potential benefits are specific to the procedure referenced in the footnoted publications.

Sample Referral Letters from Surgeons

Sample 4: Thank You/Sorry We Missed You Letter After Events

Dear Dr. _____,

Thank you very much for joining me at [insert event title]. <Or: Sorry that we missed you recently at [insert event title].> What a rich discussion we had! To recap just a few highlights:

- [insert key topic presented/discussed at the event]

As discussed, recent advances in robotic-assisted surgery have changed surgical practices and extended another option of minimally invasive surgery to patients. At our practice, over XX% of patients now receive minimally invasive robotic-assisted surgery for a wide range of conditions:

- [insert patient diseases/conditions that apply to your practice]
- [insert patient diseases/conditions that apply to your practice]
- [insert patient diseases/conditions that apply to your practice]

When surgery is indicated, I make sure to explain the benefits and risks so each patient can make an informed decision and select the most appropriate option for his/her situation. I look forward to working closely with you to help your patients. Please know that we work with our staff to ensure that patients are scheduled quickly and you are kept informed. Your patients will be returned to you once postoperative care is complete. Please feel free to call me directly for any questions or consultations.

Sincerely,

[Surgeon's name, title]

[Surgeon's cell phone]

[Office phone/fax and referral coordinator's name]

[Insert Important Safety Information - see last page]

References:

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NOTE: The referenced studies evaluated an *Si* or earlier model of the *da Vinci* Surgical System. There are no clinical data currently available for the *da Vinci Xi* Surgical System. The *da Vinci Xi* Surgical System is not cleared for use in transoral otolaryngology surgical procedures and is not specifically cleared for use in prostatectomy. It is cleared for use in urologic surgical procedures.

In order to provide benefit and risk information, Intuitive Surgical reviews the highest available level of evidence on representative *da Vinci* procedures. Intuitive Surgical strives to provide a complete, fair and balanced view of the clinical literature. However, our materials should not be seen as a substitute for a comprehensive literature review for inclusion of all potential outcomes. We encourage patients and physicians to review the original publications and all available literature in order to make an informed decision. Clinical studies are available at pubmed.gov.

Important Safety Information:

Serious complications may occur in any surgery, including *da Vinci*® Surgery, up to and including death. Examples of serious or life-threatening complications, which may require prolonged and/or unexpected hospitalization and/or reoperation, include but are not limited to one or more of the following: injury to tissues/organs, bleeding, infection and internal scarring that can cause long-lasting dysfunction/pain. Risks of surgery also include the potential for equipment failure and/or human error. Individual surgical results may vary.

Risks specific to minimally invasive surgery, including *da Vinci* Surgery, include but are not limited to, one or more of the following: temporary pain/nerve injury associated with positioning; temporary pain/discomfort from the use of air or gas in the procedure; a longer operation and time under anesthesia and conversion to another surgical technique. If your doctor needs to convert the surgery to another surgical technique, this could result in a longer operative time, additional time under anesthesia, additional or larger incisions and/or increased complications.

Patients who are not candidates for non-robotic minimally invasive surgery are also not candidates for *da Vinci*® Surgery. Patients should talk to their doctor to decide if *da Vinci* Surgery is right for them. Patients and doctors should review all available information on non-surgical and surgical options in order to make an informed decision. For Important Safety Information, including surgical risks, indications, and considerations and contraindications for use, please also refer to www.davincisurgery.com/safety and www.intuitivesurgical.com/safety.

The implementation of a *da Vinci*® Surgery program is practice- and hospital-specific. Results may vary. Past customer experience does not imply any guarantee of results in practice or program success. When considering cost-effectiveness of an advanced technology like the *da Vinci* System, we recommend that hospitals perform a full cost-benefit analysis, considering not just the operating room costs but the costs associated with hospital stays, procedure-related complications and hospital re-admissions.

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