

# Group Visits

How to explode revenue for your practice

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## **EXPAND** Your Reach

Use a proven system for reaching more patients in less time

## **MAXIMIZE** Your Resources

Add additional resources that make, NOT cost you money

## **INCREASE** Your Revenue

Generate additional revenue and increase patient referrals without costly marketing efforts

## **TRANSFORM** Your Patients

Encourage patient accountability, increase patient results, and enroll their community

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## Case Illustration

Mrs. Brown, a 49-year-old female, comes to you for care. She has recently been diagnosed with type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, weight gain, joint pain and hormonal imbalance. She is tired, frustrated and feeling hopeless. Efforts to lose weight have failed, and she is losing sleep from stressing out that this is her new normal. During her visit, you decide on a course of action to help improve her health. In addition to addressing her medical issues, you sign her up for *The Official Anti-Inflammatory Diet Masterclass* to provide the learning and support she will need in order to contribute to her wellness plan. You also schedule her first Group Visit.

The model of group medical care or the “Group Visit” dates back to at least 1990 when it was used by John Scott, MD of Kaiser Permanente Denver. This E-Book is designed to help you treat more patients, more efficiently while creating more income!

### What is a Group Visit?

Group Visits (also known as Shared Medical Appointments or SMAs) operate as an innovative model of care where patients meet with their practitioner as a group for usually 1.5–2 hours. This model of care is hailed by *TIME* magazine and used by industry leaders, including Kaiser Permanente and The Cleveland Clinic.

The structure of the group is designed to provide patient education and facilitate group discussion around a particularly common condition such as inflammation. Since almost every patient experiences the ill effects of chronic inflammation, keeping a broad topic helps reach a wider patient group. Choosing a particular inflammatory condition such as diabetes, heart disease, joint pain, etc. limits the number of patients that might fit into the group, therefore limiting attendance.

### Why Patients Need Group Visits

Patients tend to leave their chosen provider’s care for the following reasons:

- Dissatisfied with the level of communication provided
- Want or need more attention or support
- Inability to discuss all of their concerns during the scheduled visit
- Feel unheard or that no one understands what they are experiencing
- Feel afraid that needs are not understood or not fully addressed
- Lack confidence in their treatment plan
- Feel like something is missing
- Not fully understanding their part in the process

- Lack the tools, support and information needed for success
- Don't know where to start

Group Visits address these concerns by providing the extra time, information, tools and support your patient needs. These visits can reduce the patient's overall healthcare costs, increase their satisfaction and empower their success.

***Successful patients are your MOST POWERFUL referral source!***

# Why Group Visits are a SMART Choice for Your Practice

## Group Visits provide you with:

- Streamlined way to review health targets and progress
- Patient accountability and compliance
- Increased patient outcomes
- Additional income
- Ability to see (and bill for) multiple patients at once
- Steady referral stream
- Healthier patient base
- Efficient face-to-face interaction with patients
- Ability to have in-depth conversations with your patients
- Valuable teaching opportunities
- Increased influence

You are no longer wasting time, money and energy repeating and delivering the same educational content to every patient who walks through your door. Engaging your patient in groups allows a unique process to occur. Patients start to share valuable information and insights with one another. They are naturally more suggestible to valuable health information and feel psychologically empowered in a group setting.

## How to Implement Group Visits

We suggest starting with a self-study course such as *The Official Anti-Inflammatory Diet Masterclass* (we will explain what this course is and how to access it at the end of this article). Using a core course of learning can be a powerful way to keep your patients:

- Learning on their own and at their desired pace
- Supported with the resources and tools necessary for success
- Focused on a specific topic or theme for your Group Visit
- Engaged in support of their peers (The course comes with an online support group)

The masterclass also offers you a pre-designed framework for your Group Visits. You can expand on the topics included in the course or talk about your treatment options that also reduce inflammation or create balance in the body.

Whether or not you use the course as a launching pad for your Group Visits, implementing them will require some advanced planning and preparation.

- Choose a foundational topic for the Group Visit and name it accordingly. Possible topics may include: inflammation, pain, weight loss, or any symptom/condition you treat in MOST of your patients. Let's say you choose inflammation. You would let your patient know that their next visit will be an Anti-Inflammatory Group Visit on January 5<sup>th</sup> at 4:00 p.m.
- When onboarding a new patient, let them know that their treatment plan will be comprehensive and that they will be participating in their course of treatment. This may include individual visits, Group Visits, and online learning. Your website, intake paperwork and initial consultation are great places to create this understanding.
- Prescribe the online learning and Group Visit model for any patient who needs additional support, has a strong desire to learn and is motivated to create maximum change. Help them understand that participation in this approach is proven to increase their success.
- Keep your Group Visits to a manageable size, typically 10-20 patients maximum.
- Consider allowing a support person (friend/family member) attend the visit with them at no additional charge or at a reduced rate. The potential for this person to also become a patient will certainly be worth the extra seat.
- Charge for the appointment at the time of booking to decrease the potential of cancellations.
- Even if you have someone lead the group with you, be sure you are there as well. It is important that you do not give up the value of facetime with your patients.
- Have a disclosure or group agreement stating that everything shared in the group is confidential. Do not disclose the personal information of any patient. They will likely choose to share it themselves if desired.

## How to Offer Group Visits

1. **Frame your Group Visit as you would an individual visit.** Avoid presenting the visit as a "class" or optional supplement to your care. Just as you would with your individual visits, simply say, "I would like to see you next at our Group Visit. We can get you scheduled for that at the front desk. I would also like to have an individual follow-up visit two weeks later."

2. **Set expectations.** Have information ready to hand out to the patient at their first visit, explaining that your care will include individual visits, online learning and Group Visits.
3. **Use the Sample Group Visit Scheduling Form** located at the bottom of this eBook at the time of scheduling.
4. **Call to confirm as you would an individual appointment.** Studies show that practices that call patients to confirm their Group Visits have improved attendance rates.

### Sample Group Visit Structure:

- Inform the patient that you would like for them to participate in an online course at their own pace. Explain that they will also be attending several group visits to ensure their success. The course will help them: learn how their diet is contributing to their condition, know exactly what changes to make and how to make them. The group visit will expand on their learning, provide peer support and allow you to answer any questions or concerns they have.
  - Prescribe *The Official Anti-Inflammatory Diet Masterclass* and get them signed up in one of two ways:
    1. Sign up for them online in your office with their credit card using your unique login. They have immediate access and you receive 40% of their purchase in 30 days.
    2. Give them your unique access code (often housed also on your website) and have them sign up online. If they follow through, they have immediate access, and you receive 40% of their purchase in 30 days.
- Tip:** Design a package that includes their course cost and 3-4 Group Visits and charges the patient for the package. Then go online to register them for the course as described in option 1.
- Inform the patient that they should start and follow the course at a pace that is comfortable for them. Request that they write down any questions, concerns, or thoughts and bring them to the Group Visit on XYZ date and time. Charge the patient for the Group Visit (or package) before they leave.
  - Group Visits typically last 1.5–2 hours and follow a pre-designed format.
  - During check-in, you will meet any potential patients, fill any product or prescription needs and perform progress measurement (weighing, urinalysis, measurements, etc.). If you conduct these services at any point during the Group Visit, be sure you have access to a private exam area.
  - Introduce yourself, other group leaders/hosts, welcome visitors and explain what the group can expect from the Group Visit.

- Share information with the group. You can pull from the course, expand on a topic, or explain a topic, treatment or supplemental product that you offer that supports their desired outcome.
- Take a 5 or 10-minute break. During this time, finish any business from check-in.
- Conduct a group discussion or Q&A. Answer any questions or concerns that patients have brought to discuss while taking the course.

**Tip:** While you may be tempted to develop structured lesson plans for the Group Visit, it is not advised. Research has shown that patients will naturally discuss content that is valuable to the group, particularly when outside group structure is provided like the structure provided in *The Official Anti-Inflammatory Diet Masterclass*. By allowing your patients to contribute to the process, they will naturally form closer bonds and develop the self-confidence to make lasting life changes.

The very nature of the group format allows patients to talk about general concerns or experiences that may not come up in an individual session. You will likely find that the issues and questions that come up are solved by their peers during the visit, especially if you make it safe for them to discuss their struggles, fears and concerns.

Patients need frequent, basic health and wellness information that you already know and do not need to prepare for. If a question or topic comes up that you feel uncomfortable addressing, simply say, "Let's table that until our next Group Visit where I can give you my well-researched opinion."

## Timing and Scheduling of Group Visits

While knowing your patient base will give you valuable information about their availability, the doctors we have worked with report the following tips that are working for them:

1. For a patient base that works traditional hours: Before 8:30 a.m. or after 5:00 p.m., ending before 9:00 p.m.
2. For retired groups, stay-at-home parents, work-from-home groups, business owners: Between 11:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m.
3. Group Visits can be held weekly, bi-weekly or monthly depending on your patient base and the number of patients in the group. Using an online course like *The Official Anti-Inflammatory Diet Masterclass* can be helpful for keeping patients learning and on-track between visits.
4. The most successful Group Visits cover a span of 4-8 months.

**Tip:** Patients report enjoying having extra facetime with their practitioner as well as the camaraderie of peer support that Group Visits provide. It is not uncommon for friendships to develop, patient referrals to increase, and patients to begin leading their own events like a recipe or meal prep exchange. One group was even reported to conduct a clothing swap party because so many group members were losing weight.



## What to Charge for Group Visits

Determining Group Visit fees depends on a number of factors. Here are some things to consider:

1. What is your current cost for an office visit?
2. If you have 2-10 participants bringing a guest that provides you a potential referral, what is the value of that potential referral?
3. Are you selling your services as a package?
4. How large is your patient base?
5. Not charging generally devalues the service in the patient's mind.
6. If you decide that the referral opportunity makes hosting the Group Visit without charge an option, simply charge them for *The Official Anti-Inflammatory Diet Masterclass* (you receive 40% of that charge) and tell the patient that you are offering the program package at a discount. They will receive the online course, over 500 recipes, and 4 Group Visits with free passes to bring friends and family for support for only XYZ dollars.
7. Another option is to charge the patient the full amount of your program and return 50% of their money when they complete the course, bring a support person and attend 4 Group Visits.

***For more information on what to charge, structuring programs for your practice, or to learn about using *The Official Anti-Inflammatory Diet Masterclass* with your patients, contact us here for a free conversation. [Info@vitalityconsultantsLLC.com](mailto:Info@vitalityconsultantsLLC.com).***

## Barriers to Consider When Offering a Group Visit

Knowing what barriers you might face and how to address those concerns can help ensure a successful Group Visit process. Potential barriers include:

- **Privacy Concerns** - Address this before it occurs by having a policy and description of the visit to give to the patient at the time their Group Visit is scheduled.
- **Fear of Participation** - Help patients feel comfortable that while it is important that they listen, they will not be called on to share personal information or talk in the group unless they choose to.
- **Space** - Often, your waiting room is a great place to host a Group Visit. Other options include communal conference rooms. If you do not have one, find a local business that does and offer to allow them to invite their patient base to participate. (Suggest to them that they advertise: What is Wealth without Health?) This allows you access to a wider group of potential patients. If you are using *The Official Anti-*

*Inflammatory Diet Masterclass* as a foundation for the course, this also allows you additional income

- **Attendance** - It is essential that you make your topic wide enough that it extends to most or all of your patient base. If you are just starting your practice, allowing family members to attend can increase attendance. Open the visits to your family or friends as well (at low or reduced cost), if needed. REMEMBER, two or more people make a group.
- **Timing** - Host your Group Visit at a time and day that is convenient for your patient base.
- **Patients with Special Needs** - Hearing impairments that prevent patients from participating in a group setting comfortably, inability to speak in or understand the groups' native language, and patients who are divisive or particularly demanding, etc. may benefit from individual appointments rather than participating in Group Visits.

## Sample Group Visit Appointment Reminder:

Congratulations on making the decision to improve your health! We are excited to have you join us. You will be participating in both an online course and six Group Visits over the next six months. It is important that you do your part in participating in both the course and the Group Visits.

### *The Official Anti-Inflammatory Diet Masterclass*

We have signed you up for this course here today. To get started, follow these easy steps:

1. Go to this website: (Insert your practice's private access link here)
2. Log in with your email address and this password (patient's selected password or a starter password you choose for them, maybe your practice name and year)
3. Start the course.
4. If you have any difficulties, reach out to [info@vitalityconsultantsllc.com](mailto:info@vitalityconsultantsllc.com), and they will help you troubleshoot.

## Sample Group Visit Scheduling Form:

Your first Group Visit will be \_\_\_\_\_(Date)\_\_\_\_\_ (Timeframe)\_\_\_\_\_ (Location).

Dress comfortably and feel free to bring a friend or family member at (no extra) charge to support you. You may also want to bring a pen and paper to take notes.

### Here is how a Group Visit works:

Group Visits are a progressive modality that doctors and wellness professionals throughout the country use to support their patients' success. Group Visits provide you with the opportunity to have quality time with your doctor outside of the normal timeframe of an individual visit. Group Visits allow you the opportunity to bring friends or family members that can provide the support, learning, and reinforcement necessary to your success (and often help them, as well).

### Here is how it works for the patient:

Your doctor will meet with you and several other patients who are also participating in the course right here in our office (or state the private location). You will spend about XYZ hours (state the duration) together expanding upon what you are learning in your course. We will take time to answer all of your questions, concerns and discuss strategies for supporting your success. If you have specific needs, you will have an opportunity to talk with your doctor privately as well (if you are offering your visits as part of a package, you might add). While these Group Visits are optional, we believe your participation will be helpful for you and for others that attend.

Our Group Visit program was developed to provide you with the opportunity to meet with your doctor on a regular basis and to learn how to make significant lifestyle changes as simple and attainable as possible. Group Visits also give you the opportunity to connect with and experience from other patients who are making similar lifestyle changes. If you have any questions regarding your Group Visit, please let us know. We are happy to answer your questions.

Should you decide at any time that you will not be participating in a Group Visit, please let us know so that we can adjust accordingly.

Your next Group Visit will be: \_\_\_\_\_

Your next individual visit will be: \_\_\_\_\_

Our phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

***For more information regarding adding Group Visits to your practice, or to learn about using The Official Anti-Inflammatory Diet Masterclass with your patients, contact us here for a free conversation.***

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## References for learning more about Group Visits



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