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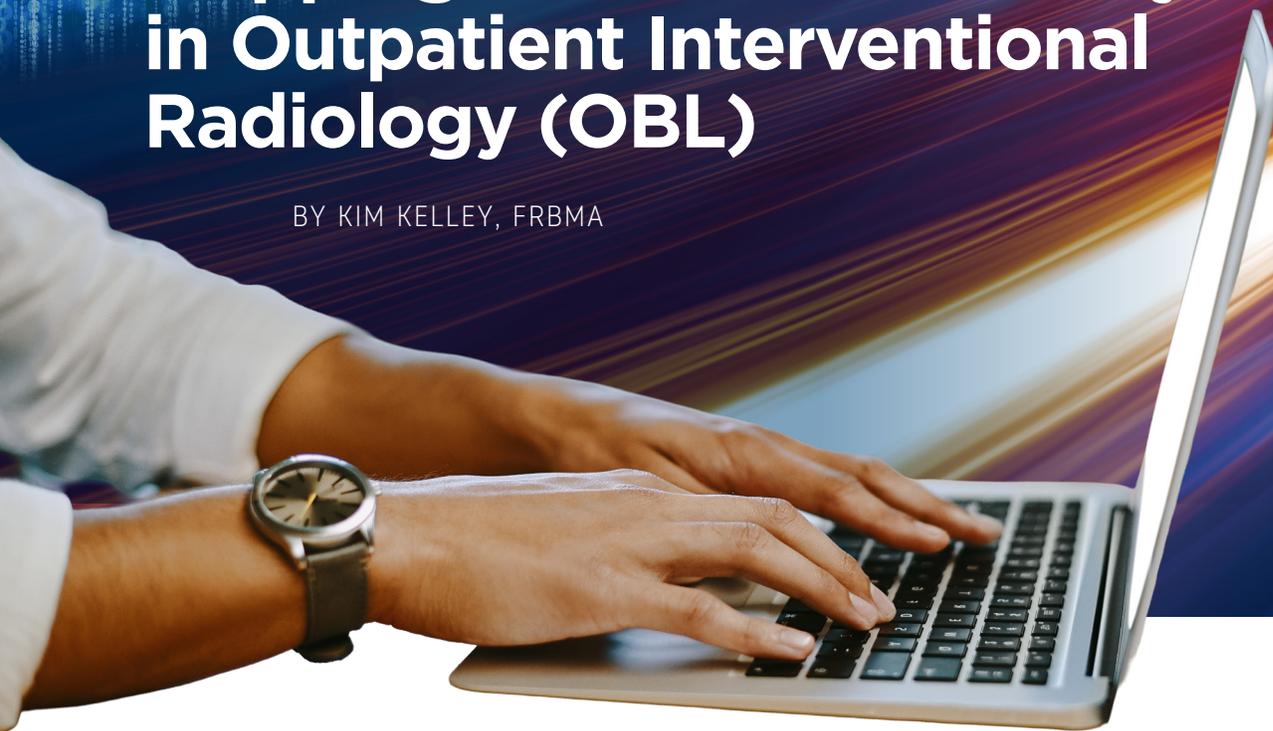
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RADIOLOGY BUYERS' GUIDE

Beyond the Referral: Mapping the Patient Journey in Outpatient Interventional Radiology (OBL)

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In the world of outpatient interventional radiology, the patient journey doesn't always begin with a referral. More often, it begins with curiosity, confusion, or concern—and a search bar. Unlike hospital-based interventional radiology, where referrals are the primary access point, office-based labs (OBLs) operate in a landscape that blurs the lines between consumerism and clinical care. That makes mapping the patient journey not just a nice-to-have, but a strategic necessity.

Understanding how patients discover, evaluate, and ultimately choose your OBL can expose overlooked gaps and unlock smarter growth. This isn't theory. It's field-tested strategy.



1. Meet Your New Front Door: Awareness Without a Referral

For many OBLs, awareness starts online. Patients with chronic conditions—BPH, uterine fibroids, peripheral artery disease—often begin by searching for relief, not a provider. This makes digital visibility mission-critical. Search engine optimization (SEO) and paid search (SEM) campaigns should be optimized for symptom-based queries like “heavy legs treatment” or “fibroid alternatives to surgery.” A well-maintained Google Business Profile can serve as a patient's first impression, and patient reviews act as modern-day referral letters, shaping trust before the first call.

This early phase of the journey is less about clinical detail and more about emotional reassurance. Patients want to feel understood, not overwhelmed.



2. The Decision Phase: Content, Convenience, and Clarity

Once they find you, how easy is it to understand what you do and how to access it? Your website should clearly explain conditions and treatments in plain language and offer user-friendly features such as online scheduling or quick callbacks. Insurance and cost information should be transparent and easy to find, and your physician profiles should help humanize your practice and reflect your approachability.

This phase of the journey is your time to build confidence and reduce friction. Don't assume patients know what interventional radiology is. Show them how your services solve their problems.



3. The Access Gap: Converting Interest into Action

This is where many OBLs fall short. Patients are ready to act but encounter friction: no one answers the phone, online forms are clunky or ignored, or it's unclear what happens next after a request. Map this phase tightly. Call your own office after hours. Try filling out a form. Walk the same road your patients do. Then close the gaps. Removing barriers at this stage often leads to the most immediate gains.



4. Experience + Follow-Through = Loyalty

Once the patient walks through your doors, the journey isn't over. It's just getting started. From the ease and friendliness of check-in to the clarity of staff communication during the procedure, each interaction contributes to the overall impression. Follow-up must be clear and timely. Patients should leave feeling seen, supported, and confident in their next steps.

And don't forget their provider. Did your team close the loop with clear, timely communication? Did the referring physician or PCP receive the documentation they need, in the format they prefer? These small touches reinforce professionalism and reliability.



5. Measure What Matters

Journey mapping should guide what you measure. Focus on high-impact metrics. Track how many leads come from search versus referrals. Measure your appointment conversion rate from web forms. Assess how long it takes from initial interest to scheduled procedure. And don't underestimate the value of post-visit feedback. What are patients saying about their experience? You don't need 100 data points. You need a few meaningful ones that spotlight where to invest attention.

INTENTIONAL EXPERIENCES CREATE GROWTH

In the OBL space, you can't rely solely on the old referral pipeline. You have to shape the journey patients take toward choosing you—and make it a smooth one. That means building trust before you ever speak to them, delivering clarity before consultation, and offering reassurance before results.

Mapping the patient journey in outpatient IR is more than an operations exercise. It's a marketing mandate. The OBLs that grow won't just offer great care—they'll design great experiences, from first search to final follow-up. 



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