Dermatology practice opening checklist

From *Starting your dermatology practice, step by step* by Vignesh Ramachandran, MD. 63 tasks in 10 groups, plus the 6-month timeline. Every fee and figure behind these tasks is sourced at fluencederm.com/guide.

THE 6-MONTH TIMELINE

Before the clock starts: have your own lawyer read your employment contract. Its notice period and non-compete set your real opening date (section 02). Line up a healthcare attorney and an accountant. If you need a new state license, apply now.

MONTH 1 · 6 MONTHS OUT

Start the slow things

- Form your entity, get the EIN
- Get the practice's Type 2 NPI
- Lock in your location (applications need the address)
- Get malpractice quotes
- Build your CAQH profile, submit Medicare and payer applications
- Open the business bank account

MONTH 2 · 5 MONTHS OUT

Space and big decisions

- Sign the lease after a lawyer reads it
- Start build-out plans and permits; plan a Mohs lab room now if you may ever want one
- Decide who will do your billing
- Demo EMRs with a real visit, end to end
- Follow up on every payer application

MONTH 3 · 4 MONTHS OUT

Order the long-lead items

- State controlled-substance registration (if required), then DEA at this address
- Order chairs, lights and procedure equipment
- Choose your pathology lab and clearinghouse
- Get phone and fax numbers; claim your Google Business Profile
- Sign the EMR contract and its BAA

MONTH 4 · 3 MONTHS OUT

Lab, prices and people

- Apply for your CLIA certificate
- Build your fee schedule and self-pay price list
- Make your Good Faith Estimate template
- Hire your first staff
- Website live with insurance list, booking and required notices

MONTH 5 · 2 MONTHS OUT

Set up and get known

- EMR templates, e-prescribing, EPCS, iPLEDGE registration
- ERA and EFT with every payer
- Waste, sharps, shredding, liquid nitrogen and courier contracts
- Visit nearby primary care and urgent care offices
- Patient notice goes out, within your contract's rules

MONTH 6 · FINAL MONTH

Rehearse

- Train staff, run a mock clinic day, send test claims
- Confirm each payer's effective date in writing
- Check your listing in every payer directory
- Open booking for approved payers and self-pay
- Final inspections and occupancy sign-off

Opening week: book lightly, review every claim before it goes out, check the biopsy log every day, and ask every new patient how they found you.

YOUR CURRENT JOB

- ☐ Contract read by your own healthcare employment lawyer
- ☐ Last day, non-compete zone and non-solicit terms written down
- ☐ Notice given in writing, as the contract requires
- ☐ Tail coverage (or prior-acts coverage) arranged, and who pays is settled
- ☐ Patient notice letter agreed with your employer

ENTITY AND LICENSES

- [ ] Entity formed; operating agreement or bylaws signed
- [ ] EIN received
- [ ] Type 2 NPI for the practice
- [ ] State medical license active
- [ ] State controlled-substance registration (if required) and DEA at this address
- [ ] Malpractice policy active from opening day
- [ ] Business bank account, bookkeeping and payroll set up
- [ ] Local business license and sign permits
- [ ] General liability, property, cyber and workers' comp insurance

PAYERS

- [ ] CAQH profile complete and attested (calendar reminder every 120 days)
- [ ] Medicare approved, benefits reassigned, effective date in writing
- [ ] Medicaid approved (if accepting)
- [ ] Each commercial and Medicare Advantage contract signed, effective date in writing
- [ ] ERA and EFT set up for every payer
- [ ] Payer tracker up to date

BILLING AND MONEY

- [ ] Billing owner named (service, in-house or you)
- [ ] Clearinghouse connected; test claims accepted
- [ ] Fee schedule loaded (one multiple of Medicare, one schedule for all payers)
- [ ] Self-pay price list written and posted
- [ ] Good Faith Estimate template ready; notice posted in office and online
- [ ] ABN process for Medicare patients
- [ ] Card reader, card on file and statements working
- [ ] Financial policy signed by patients: copays, no-shows, payment plans
- [ ] Cash reserve or line of credit in place

LAB AND PATHOLOGY

- [ ] CLIA certificate for this address (waiver, PPM or higher)
- [ ] Pathology lab set up: in-network check, requisitions, jars, courier cut-off, results route
- [ ] Specimen log and weekly overdue check ready
- [ ] Reference lab account for bloodwork
- [ ] iPLEDGE registered and activated; designee trained (if prescribing isotretinoin)
- [ ] Mohs decision made: refer out, offer now, or phase in

SPACE AND SAFETY

- [ ] Final inspections passed; occupancy approved
- [ ] Rooms stocked from the supply list
- [ ] Autoclave tested with logs, or disposable plan in place
- [ ] Sharps, biohazard waste and shredding contracts
- [ ] Liquid nitrogen supplier and safe storage
- [ ] OSHA bloodborne pathogens plan and safety data sheets
- [ ] Emergency kit checked; staff know where it is
- [ ] Standard photo setup and photo consent forms

GETTING PATIENTS

- [ ] Google Business Profile verified, real name only, photos added
- [ ] Website live: insurance, booking, forms, prices, Good Faith Estimate notice, privacy notice
- [ ] Listing checked in every payer directory
- [ ] Referral offices visited; one-page referral sheet handed out
- [ ] One review request process, the same for every patient
- [ ] "How did you find us?" recorded for every new patient

PEOPLE AND POLICIES

- [ ] Staff hired and trained on HIPAA, OSHA and your workflows
- [ ] HIPAA risk assessment, privacy and security policies, Notice of Privacy Practices
- [ ] BAAs signed with every vendor that touches patient data
- [ ] Procedure and photography consent forms
- [ ] Mock clinic day done

TECHNOLOGY

- [ ] EMR set up with your templates and fee schedule; export terms in the contract
- [ ] E-prescribing working; EPCS set up if needed
- [ ] Phone, voicemail and e-fax working
- [ ] Online booking and reminders on
- [ ] Two-factor login on every account; backups tested

OPENING WEEK

- [ ] Light schedule for the first week
- [ ] Every claim reviewed before it goes out
- [ ] Biopsy log checked every day
- [ ] Daily 5-minute huddle

Rules and fees change. Confirm details with a healthcare attorney, an accountant and each payer before you act. Questions or corrections: vig.ramachandran@gmail.com