



## Social Media and the Medical Practice

Chances are you've heard the terms; Social Media, Facebook or Twitter, just to name a few. The problem is that most physician practices have a minimal understanding of these, and sometimes even less about how to use it in the healthcare marketing arena. Social Media as a marketing and communication tool can be a powerful ally if you have a clear understanding of the fundamentals. Let's start at the beginning:

### *What is it?*

Simply put, Social Media is an online conversation that facilitates interactive dialogue using web-based technologies that allow for communication between organizations, communities and individuals.

### *Where is it?*

It is happening all across the word wide web at places such as: Facebook, LinkedIn, Flickr, YouTube. For many physicians, it is happening at Sermo, Ozmosis, Social MD and DoctorNetworking.

### *Who's using it?*

For patients:

- 88% of internet users look for health information online before seeking medical care
- 34% of internet users (or 25% of adults) have read someone else's commentary or experience about health or medical issues on an online news group or blog
- 25% of internet users have watched an online video about health or medical issues
- 25% of internet users have tracked their weight, diet, exercise routine or other health indicator online



- Of those who did a health related search:
  - 6 in 10 say the data found affected a decision
  - 1 in 2 say it led them to ask new questions
  - 1 in 3 say it affected a visit

For physicians:

- U.S. Hospitals and physician practices currently manage the following:
  - 548 YouTube Channels
  - 1018 Facebook pages
  - 788 Twitter Accounts
  - 458 LinkedIn Accounts
  - 913 Four Square
  - 137 Blogs
  - 3,952 Hospital Social Networking Sites
- 72% of US Physicians use smartphones
- 30% of physicians access medical information using a handheld device or smartphone & 95% of physicians who use smartphones use them to download apps to access medical information
- 88% of all physicians use the Internet **to access pharmaceutical, biotech and medical device information** as estimated by Manhattan Research.
- The same report noted that 41% of all the research physicians does takes place online, and that the majority of physicians expect that ratio to double in the coming year



## Before you jump into Social Media

Make sure you have clearly defined your business goals and objectives. It is important to remember that Social Media is only one tool of several in your marketing and communication arsenal and must be considered and contemplated in those terms.

As with any other strategy, you must do your homework to see what social mediums are out there and assess whether or not they will support your goals. If they do, then select one, maybe two at the most, to begin your journey into the Social Media world.

Assess the manpower it takes to keep up with the medium. A common mistake that practices make is the hasty decision to jump with having the resources committed to keeping it up.

Determine what metrics you can use to measurement your success. Keep in mind, if you can't measure, it doesn't exist.

## Summary & Implications

In conclusion, Social Media and web integration are areas of rapid growth and present several core opportunities for PSG physician clients:

- Communicate about specialty information and expertise
- Build trust as a provider of valuable information and as someone engaged with patients
- "Listen" to patients and healthcare consumers & learn more about competitors
- Collaborate with colleagues and cultivate referral relationships

And while the opportunities to expand your marketing efforts are abundant, PSG underscores that Social Media is only one tool and not necessarily THE tool. Before you embark on a Social Media journey, go back and re-read the paragraph of "***Before you jump into Social Media***".