



# Nearly All U.S. DOCTORS Are Now on SOCIAL MEDIA; *Shouldn't You be Too?*

**P**harma may be a late adopter of social media, but doctors are all in. According to a recent American Medical News article, Frost & Sullivan found that 84% of doctors use social media for personal purposes. This was confirmed by a QuantiaMD study in which nearly 90% of physicians reported they used at least one social media site.

Pharma's reticence regarding social media is primarily due to well-founded concern about adverse event (AE) reporting. But a recent study by social technology firm Visible Technologies noted that AE reports are found in a miniscule three-tenths of 1% of social posts. And social networking with healthcare professionals is arguably less likely to generate AE reports that would not have been submitted anyway through normal channels.

## Evaluating Benefits vs. Risks

While the first rule of marketing and medicine is "first, do no harm," one must always weigh the benefits versus the risks of any marketing tactic. And the benefits of social media are legion. Doctors want 24/7/365 access to pharma — social networking gives them an easy-to-use option to communicate with pharma personnel, including reps and medical science liaisons. anytime, anywhere using their iPhones and tablets, which are widely used by the profession. Eighty percent of physicians carry smartphones, twice the adoption level of consumers, and they reference them five times or more daily, according to IQ Innovation.

Social media may be the 21st century way to develop a real, meaningful relationship with the medical profession, the holy grail of pharma marketing, in an unobtrusive, cost-effective way and become a resource rather than an intrusion.

## Getting Connected

Once you commit to using social media as a tool to network with healthcare professionals, the challenge becomes how to get them to connect with your social profiles — Twitter, Google+, Facebook, etc.

The best way is email, arguably. Email is an in-medium, online promotional vehicle. Include links to your social profiles, and you're one click away from a social connection. There are various tactics.

You can include "follow" links in your existing email promotional program. Or you can do dedicated promotions with offers such as "Follow us on Twitter to get the latest updates on your specialty, request samples, and learn about CME opportunities." Once you have them on one social network, you can cross-promote to others.

## Getting Creative

It's also time for all media to get creative socially. Publishers, for example, are a great untapped resource to build social communities. Imagine a program in which your advertising spend drives physicians and other healthcare professionals to your Twitter profile. Creative might encourage readers to follow you @xyzcompany or @xyzproduct. From there, you can promote company- or product-related apps, CME opportunities, or patient education materials that doctors can retweet to patients and colleagues. You can also encour-

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age doctors and other prescribers to follow their own reps on Twitter. Social media can empower your sales force to provide the easy, "always on" access to your company that doctors want, so they can get answers when they need them in real time.

Take it one step further on the publishing side. Encourage your media reps to collect Twitter handles as they generate circulation requests. These can be used to promote disease state or product sites hosted by the publisher and supported with your product's online ads. This

gives you a more flexible platform to experiment in social media, powered by media production and creative teams who will be responsive to your needs. **PV**

**MMS**, the industry leader in healthcare lists and email marketing services, can drive traffic to social profiles with email service to more than 1 million healthcare professionals; work with media partners to set up landing pages that connect doctors with their sales reps; smoothly and seamlessly weave social media into a multichannel, integrated marketing program that puts brands at the cutting edge of 21st century medical marketing.

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