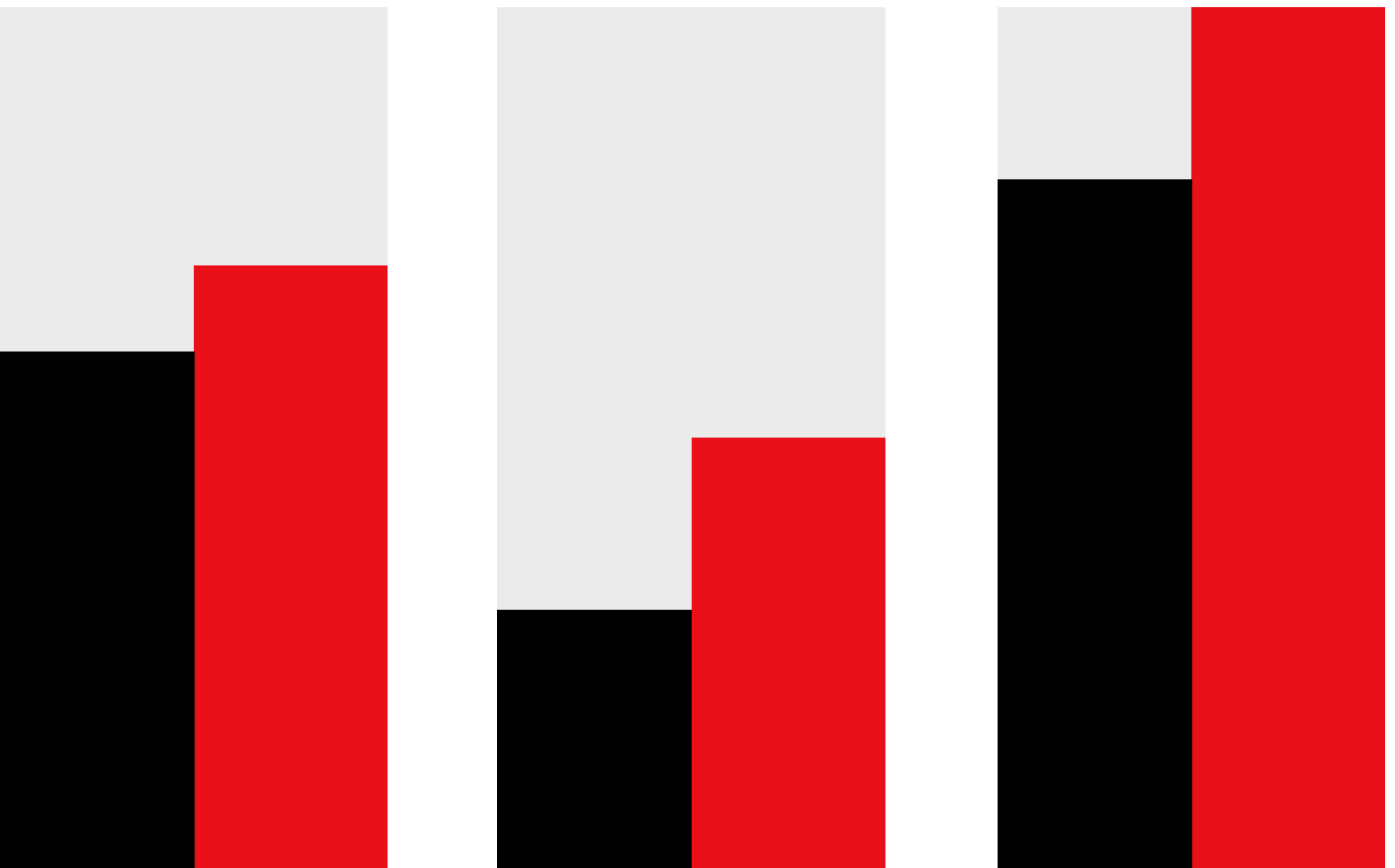


US Physicians on Social Media

What Marketers Need to Know About How Doctors Engage on Social Platforms

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Physicians are active social media users

The pandemic fast-tracked physicians' online engagement, with many gravitating toward social media sites to contest the onslaught of misleading medical information. Doctors now use both public and private social platforms to find and share healthcare information, discuss industry news, and build their personal and professional brands.

Social media in this report refers to physician-only online communities, such as Doximity and Sermo, and mainstream social platforms, including X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, LinkedIn, and Facebook.

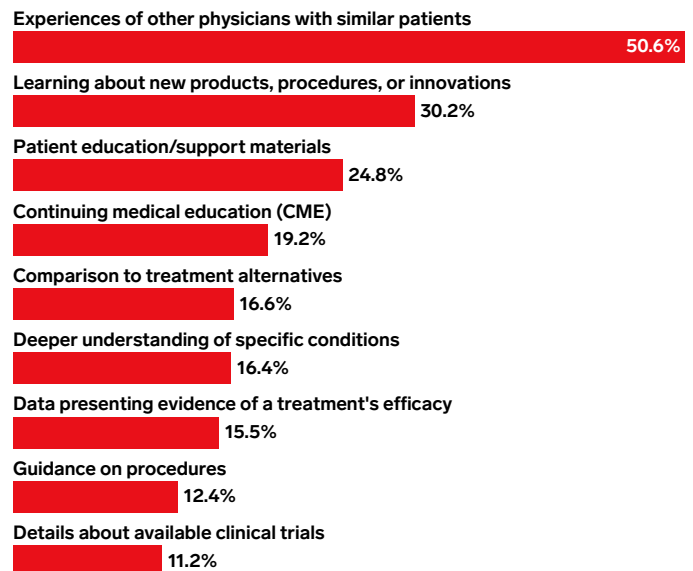
Doctors view social media as a valuable resource for medical information and engaging in health-focused conversations

- **Many clinicians find social media to be a useful professional tool.** Just 22% of doctors completely dismiss social media as a resource. And 60% of physicians are either neutral (22%) about using private and public social platforms as a professional information source or see it as at least somewhat beneficial to their work (38%), according to a December 2022 survey from Sermo and LiveWorld.
- **Physician social users want information that will help them with patient care.** Learning about their colleagues' experiences with similar patients (50.6%) is most valuable to doctors on public and private social platforms, per a May 2023 survey from M3 MI's (formerly Kantar Media Healthcare Research) "Sources & Interactions" study. Almost a third (30.2%) of healthcare providers see social media as a channel for learning about new products, procedures, or innovations. And nearly one-quarter (24.8%) would like to find information from pharmaceutical companies on patient support programs.

- **Professional and medical advancement also keeps doctors engaged with social media.** More than half (51.3%) of physicians stay active in order to find out about continuing medical education opportunities that are sometimes needed to remain licensed, according to an August 2023 survey in M3 MI's "Digital Insights" study. Additional career-focused reasons include staying up to date on breaking healthcare news (49.8%) and product safety information (49.6%), as well as reading posts from key opinion leaders (KOLs) in healthcare (38.1%).
- **But physicians' social media experiences aren't always positive.** About two-thirds of doctors and scientists reported being harassed on social platforms, according to an August 2022 survey published by JAMA Network Open. Among respondents, 88% reported harassment in response to their advocacy of issues such as COVID-19 public health guidance.

Types of Information US Physicians* Like to Receive on Social Media, May 2023

% of respondents



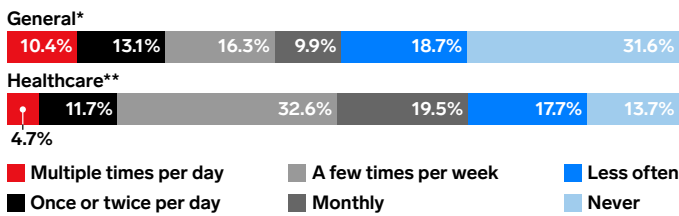
Note: *among physicians who are social media users
Source: M3 MI/Kantar Media Healthcare Research, "Sources & Interactions 2023," July 15, 2023

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Frequency With Which US Physicians Use General* vs. Healthcare** Social Networks for Professional Purposes, Aug 2023

% of respondents



Note: numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding; *e.g., Facebook, LinkedIn, and X (formerly Twitter); **e.g., Doximity, Medscape Consult, and Sermo
Source: M3 MI/Kantar Media Healthcare Research, "Digital Insights 2023," Oct 1, 2023

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Physicians' social platform preferences are tied to age, medical specialty, and desire to create content

- **Older doctors gravitate toward walled garden communities for professional use, while younger clinicians prefer public social platforms.** Nearly one-quarter (22.8%) of providers ages 65 and older use physician-specific social platforms at least once a day, per M3 MI's "Digital Insights" study, decreasing to 15.4% for ages 50 to 64. That compares with just 9.0% of doctors younger than 35 who are daily users of gated forums. Conversely, physicians younger than 50 are about twice as likely as doctors ages 65 and older to log on to public social media sites at least once a day.
- **Physicians providing routine care rely more on social media as a professional resource than do specialists.** Primary care providers, internists, and pediatricians are heavier social media users than other clinicians, such as neurologists, hematologists, and gastroenterologists, per LiveWorld. The disparity is likely because social media platforms are more conducive to generalized health-focused information, which is useful to practitioners who deal with a broad range of patients versus doctors with a specialized clinical focus.
- **Providers' primary use of public social media platforms is to consume clinical content, not create it.** Just 3% to 4% of clinicians predominantly use sites like LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube to produce professional content, according to an August 2023 survey from Healio and CMI Media Group. Most doctors use these public platforms chiefly for consuming healthcare information and supplementarily for creating posts, videos, and other content.

US Healthcare Providers Who Primarily Consume vs. Create Work-Related Content* on Social Media, Aug 2023

% of respondents

	Consume	Create
YouTube	48%	3%
LinkedIn	37%	4%
Facebook	26%	3%
Instagram	18%	4%
X (formerly Twitter)	16%	2%
Reddit	12%	1%
Threads	10%	2%
TikTok	7%	1%

Note: *clinical content and education/professional resources
Source: Healio Strategic Solutions (HSS) and CMI Media, "Understanding 2023 HCP Channel Trends & Preferences," Oct 10, 2023

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Physicians can be influenced by the medical information they access on social media

- **Social media content often affects provider attitudes and behaviors.** Fifty-seven percent of physicians acknowledge that they change their perception of a drug or treatment based on information on social platforms at least some of the time, per LiveWorld. Some 41% even said they have occasionally (32%) or frequently (9%) prescribed a different medication. More specifically, doctors who are active social users may alter their prescribing or treatment decisions based on posts created by medical publications (31%), colleagues (27%), and international and national healthcare associations (21%), per M3 MI's "Digital Insights" study.
- **Credible healthcare influencers on social media can be persuasive.** Nearly half (46%) of doctors follow healthcare influencers on social media, per LiveWorld. Physicians are most likely to follow influencers who are credentialed, well informed, and create relatable content. Pharmaceutical marketers are taking notice: 92% consider social health influencers to be a valuable resource for connecting with providers, and 56% included digital influencer campaigns in their 2023 budgets, per LiveWorld's research.

Insider Intelligence Interviews

Insider Intelligence | eMarketer research is based on the idea that multiple sources and a variety of perspectives lead to better analysis. Our interview outreach strategy for our reports is to target specific companies and roles within those companies in order to get a cross-section of businesses across sectors, size, and legacy. We also look to interview sources from diverse backgrounds in order to reflect a mix of experiences and perspectives that help strengthen our analysis. The people we interview for our reports are asked because their expertise helps to clarify, illustrate, or elaborate upon the data and assertions in a report.

Casey Ross

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Interviewed February 1, 2024

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[Health Trends to Watch in 2024: Misinformation and Retail Health Will Rise as the Patient Care Journey Fragments Further](#)

[Gen X and Healthcare 2023: How Providers and Marketers Can Connect With the ‘Sandwich Generation’](#)

[US Healthcare and Pharma Digital Ad Spending 2023: Shifting Consumer Media Trends Marketers Need to Know Now](#)

[Gen Z’s Take on Healthcare: How Can Providers and Marketers Adapt to This Digitally Native Cohort?](#)

Sources

[CMI Media Group](#)

[Doximity](#)

[Healio Strategic Solutions](#)

[JAMA Network Open](#)

[LiveWorld](#)

[M3 MI \(formerly Kantar Media Healthcare Research\)](#)

[Sermo](#)

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