

# One in four physicians uses social media daily

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A new survey shows that about one in four physicians uses social media daily or multiple times a day to scan or explore medical information, and 14 percent use social media each day to contribute new information, according to an oncologist at the Johns Hopkins Kimmel Cancer Center.

The survey of 485 oncologists and [primary care physicians](#), also found that on a weekly basis or more, 61 percent of physicians scan for information and 46 percent contribute new information. More than half said they use online physician-only communities but only 7 percent said they use [Twitter](#). The work was published recently in the *Journal of Medical Internet Research*.

Oncologists are more likely to use social media to keep up with innovation, while primary care physicians are more likely to use social media to get in touch with peers and learn from them, the survey found.

Since the survey was conducted a year and a half ago, it's likely that more physicians are using social media now, says Robert S. Miller, M.D., an assistant professor of oncology and oncology medical information officer at the Johns Hopkins Kimmel Cancer Center. The amount of information required for [medical practice](#) is growing exponentially, he says, and social media provides "a very valid construct for physicians to keep current."

"What did surprise us was the heavy use of online physician-only communities," Miller says. "It's possible that many physicians feel more

comfortable with that type of social media instead of a more [public space](#) like Twitter or [Facebook](#)."

In March 2011, Miller and colleagues e-mailed the survey, about attitudes and usage of social media, to a random sample of 1,695 practicing [oncologists](#) and primary care physicians found among the American Medical Association's Physician Masterfile. Social media was defined as "Internet-based applications that allow for the

creation and exchange of user-generated content, including [social networking](#), professional online communities, wikis, blogs and microblogging." Of 485 practicing physicians who responded, nearly sixty percent said social media is beneficial, engaging and good way to get current, high-quality information (279 respondents); enables them to care for patients more efficiently (281 respondents); and improves the quality of patient care they deliver (291 respondents). What influenced a physician's usage of social media most were perceived ease of use and usefulness. Physicians who had positive attitudes toward social media were more likely to use it. Neither age nor gender affected use of social media.

More studies are needed to determine how social media impacts physicians' knowledge, attitudes, skills and behaviors, and its usage among other populations of health care professionals, Miller says.

**More information:** [www.jmir.org/2012/5/e117/](http://www.jmir.org/2012/5/e117/)

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