



Are You Optimizing the Use of Social Media?

This is a powerful ally in your practice growth.

BY REM JACKSON

Practice Management Pearls is a regular feature that focuses on practice management issues presented by successful DPMs who are members of the American Academy of Podiatric Practice Management. The AAPPMP has a forty-plus year history of providing its member DPMs with practice management education and resources. Visit www.aappm.org for more information.

Social Media gets a bad rap these days and much of it is deserved. The tech companies who built these platforms are testifying in congressional hearings, and anti-trust actions are being levied against these massive companies and their grip on our national and global communication. You might be tempted to, as many are, just resign from this online mess. But that is a tactical error, a big error to be sure if you want your podiatry practice to continue to grow and thrive in our increasingly online and connected world.

Social media is like every other major new technology; it's very powerful and amplifies the best and the worst in all of us. In the specific case of doctors who are severely restricted by HIPAA, it isn't very fair either. But we must take it seriously and our practices must be online and engaged because millions of people are online every moment of every day. These people need answers to their questions about their health. It doesn't matter if you personally use or even

like social media, your practice must be in the mix and here's why:

1) It contributes to your search engine optimization (SEO). The search engines search for new, relevant content they can serve up to their users and social media posts are part of this search. They provide backlinks to your website, blog, and online offers. The more fishing poles you have in the water, the more fish you can catch.

2) It has become such a part of the fabric of our lives that if you don't participate in social media, people who need help will make assumptions about your practice (unfair and inaccurate, but nonetheless real) and the level of care and skill you can provide them.

It's an essential part of online marketing for medical offices because she uses it. Fair or not, women are the primary guardians and caretakers of their family's health. It is she who guides the care for her children and spouse, as well as extended family members such as aged parents. It's not that men aren't engaged, but for the most part, we're marketing to women. And that's great because on social media women are heavily en-

gaged, interested, and even talented users of social media.

There are some very important rules of conduct for professionals who are online and engaged in social media, both personally and professionally. Remember doctor, you're a doctor—a professional—twenty-four hours a day. When you're at the soccer game, you're a doctor. When you're at the grocery store, you're a doctor. When you're at the

sports bar, still a doctor. You're a professional and you should always hold yourself to a higher professional standard.

This means you need to keep your political opinions to yourself. No matter what you say, you'll offend half the people who read your posts. That's the nature of politics today. Unless you want to run for office, keep your political opinions offline, especially the political discourse that has become so crude and debased online. Stay away—it's like kryptonite.

If you're a deeply religious person, then by all means, be authentic and post inspired religious content that is positive and uplifts the soul from time

Continued on page 36

Social media is like every other new technology; it's very powerful and amplifies the best and the worst in all of us.

Social Media (from page 35)

to time. Just don't overdo it. You're a doctor, not a rabbi, imam, or pastor. They've got their job to do and you've got yours. Stay focused.

You should post about medical issues and problems that you'd like to treat in your office, and you should do this often.

You should post about medical issues and problems that you'd like to treat in your office, and you should do this often. Break these topics into short one-minute videos or use simple graphics to engage prospective and current patients online. But again, don't overdo it and bore your viewers. Mix it up with interesting and engaged, even inspired, content.

In recent years there has been a plethora of companies who will write content for your online platforms. The original intent was that busy medical practices would not create this content themselves; having content regularly posted is better than nothing. But it has turned out

that you just can't "farm out" your social media because no one reads yet another stock photo and post about bunions. People can smell boring stock content a mile away and they then commit the worst act they can online—they ignore it.

Conversely, when you and your staff post photos, videos, short paragraphs of content—those same online users instantly react to authentic (REAL) information from a trusted medical resource. Your engagement with users online significantly increases when you create and post your own simple and easy-to-produce online content. Consider hiring a smart individual who can manage a simple monthly calendar, and get your staff involved with helping provide useful online posts. You can easily organize your marketing calendar around simple "talking points" that

The worst crime in practice marketing is to be boring.

you consistently share with your online audience. Here are five possible talking points for your consideration:

- 1) Procedures You Would Like to See More
- 2) Healthy Tips and Facts You Can Share
- 3) Fun Stuff About Your Office
- 4) Testimonials and Success Stories
- 5) Inspirational Quotes/Books/Ideas

The worst crime in practice marketing is to be boring. By creating each day of the week something different and useful and even inspiring, you will teach the thousands (even hundreds of thousands) of people who live around your office to read your posts. Think of your own behavior—you typically ignore everything you could read or engage with, but you only go back to the sources that have rewarded you in the past, right? Your prospective new patients are no different.

You can't sit out social media. Like it or not, it's part of our lives for the foreseeable future, and if we aren't engaged, we can't contribute to or steer the conversation. Your digital marketing needs to extend across an ever-larger group of platforms and, when it does, the results can be remarkable. Be authentic and post regularly and you will be rewarded with a robust pipeline of new and returning patients. **PM**



Rem Jackson is the President and CEO of Top Practices, LLC, and the leader of the Top Practices Master Mind Group. Top Practices is a company dedicated to helping podiatrists reach their professional and personal goals by building their "perfect practice". He is a Fellow of the AAPP. He is also the recipient of the AAPP President's Award for 2012. Rem was inducted into the *Podiatry Management* Podiatric Hall of Fame in 2019. Rem can be reached

at rem@TopPractices.com. You can find out more about Top Practices at www.TopPractices.com