



Today's world is largely transparent—at least online. Whether you are into it or not, the popularity of social media is undeniable, and the proof is everywhere. Chances are you can't walk on a crowded street, stop in at your local coffee shop, take public transportation, enter your own waiting room, or even relax in your own home without witnessing someone (maybe even yourself) engaging with social media.

Most of us do it. We share that cute picture of our kids experiencing something for the first time, or post a video from the concert we went to last night, or tag the friends who were with us when we had the tastiest sushi, or show off our latest triumph. The truth is that people from all around the world



eagerly share glimpses of their daily lives, from the mundane moments to the exciting. The numbers of active users per month on Facebook and Instagram, the two most popular social media platforms in use today, are approximately 1.59 billion and 400 million, respectively.<sup>1</sup> By next year, Statista estimates that, worldwide, about 2.77 billion people will be active on social media, compared to 2.46 billion in 2017.<sup>2</sup>

The trend extends to your patients, too. Statistics show that patients of all ages use the internet as a source of information to manage health care,<sup>3</sup> and 74% of internet users engage on social media.<sup>4</sup> Not quite half, 42%, who view health information on social media look at health-related consumer reviews, and 29% will check out other patients' health-related experiences.<sup>4</sup>

According to the Pew Research Center, health care information found on social media can directly influence a patient's decision to choose a specific provider.<sup>5</sup> Today, 43% of baby boomers use social media to find out more about health care options, and 18-to-24-year-olds are twice as likely as 45-to-54-year-olds to discuss health-related issues on social media.<sup>4</sup> The good news is that 60% of all social media users say they trust doctors' posts.<sup>4</sup>

So what does this mean for you? More than likely, it means that use of social media is becoming a more important strategy in your quest to

attract your ideal patients online. But don't discount the influence of your website, either. According to Docero, your website still ranks as your biggest asset for marketing to patients,<sup>6</sup> and patients expect to be able to learn about your practice's services, learn about you and the other doctors in the practice, and even have their questions answered while visiting your website.

In the following pages, we've put together a treasure trove of information on how you can leverage social media and your website to attract more of your ideal patients online. For now, I'll leave you with a cute picture from an Instagram post of my two girls watching the sunrise from a lifeguard's chair. ■

1. 60+ social networking sites you need to know about in 2018. MakeAWebsiteHub.com. <https://makeawebsitehub.com/social-media-sites/>. Accessed August 23, 2018.

2. Number of social media users worldwide from 2010 to 2021 (in billions). Statista. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/278414/number-of-worldwide-social-network-users/>. Accessed August 23, 2018.

3. Amante DJ, Hogan TP, Pagoto SL, English TM, Lapane KL. Access to care and use of the internet to search for health information: Results from the US National Health Interview survey. *J Med Internet Res*. 2015;17(4):e106.

4. 30 facts & statistics on social media and healthcare. ReferralMD. <https://get-referralmd.com/2017/01/30-facts-statistics-on-social-media-and-healthcare/>. Accessed August 23, 2018.

5. Pew Research Center. Social media fact sheet. <http://www.pewinternet.org/fact-sheet/social-media/>. Accessed August 23, 2018.

6. This is why patients want doctors to have a website. Docero. <https://www.docero.com/2015/07/27/this-is-why-patients-want-doctors-to-have-a-website/>. Accessed August 23, 2018.

*Laura Straub*

**Laura Straub**  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF