

# THE EVOLUTION OF OPINION LEADERSHIP



A shift in the field of cataract and refractive surgery to digital opinion leaders is significant.

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The concept of opinion leadership is undergoing a significant transformation. The shift from key opinion leaders (KOLs) to digital opinion leaders (DOLs) signifies a transition in how expertise and influence are shared and received. The change is particularly noticeable in the field of cataract and refractive surgery.

## THE ROLE OF KOLS

Historically, KOLs in cataract and refractive surgery have been known for their extensive experience, prominent academic positions, and significant contributions to the medical literature. These individuals are identified and given positions at the podium by industry—first locally and then regionally and eventually globally. KOLs travel the world, play a role in guiding standard practice, influence peer opinions, and shape the direction of research through conferences, publications, and direct interactions with other surgeons.

## THE RISE OF DOLS

A digital revolution has given rise to a new generation of influencers—DOLs. Usually young, these health care professionals do not wait for industry to transform them into KOLs. Instead,

DOLs leverage digital platforms, social media channels, and online networks to differentiate themselves from their peers by creating their own personal brands, sharing insights, connecting with colleagues and patients, and affecting decision-making processes.

Whereas KOLs' influence is often limited to medical colleagues, DOLs can engage with a diverse and expansive audience, including patients.

## THE EFFECTS OF SHIFTING LEADERSHIP

Rapid advances in lens and laser surgery demand continuous knowledge sharing. Through platforms such as blogs, online forums, podcasts, and social media channels, DOLs can provide real-time updates and discuss the latest trends. This accessibility makes information readily available at any time. It also offers an opportunity to increase patient awareness when new treatment options become available.

These benefits are accompanied by challenges that should not be ignored. Ensuring the credibility of information, safeguarding patient confidentiality, and preventing and managing misinformation are crucial concerns. Handled responsibly, however, digital channels provide opportunities for learning, collaboration, and

innovation. DOLs can facilitate inclusive discussions by giving a voice to people from various locations and practice settings. Digital sharing can allow young surgeons and those from resource-limited backgrounds to access knowledge and mentorship opportunities that were previously unavailable.

## CONCLUSION

A successful approach to modern health care necessitates a blend of traditional and digital influencers. Combining the expertise, extensive knowledge, and insights of KOLs with the reach and engagement capabilities of DOLs can create a dynamic and effective knowledge-sharing ecosystem.

Advancing the field of ophthalmology requires KOLs and DOLs. By acknowledging and integrating the contributions of both, the surgical community can adapt better to change. Ultimately, this can enhance care and propel the adoption of new technologies by surgeons and patients alike. ■

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