

The Importance of a Broad Social Media Presence in Dermatology



Meet your current and potential patients on the social media platforms they prefer.

BY NAREN ARULRAJAH

>> More people are turning to social media because of its convenience. People have their favorite platforms, downloaded as apps on their mobile devices and bookmarked on their browsers. Consumers want the opinions of their peers before making important purchases, so it only makes sense that patients would want the same when working with dermatologists.

Maintaining a broad social media presence today allows many dermatology practices to not only survive but thrive. It is essential for the successful modern dermatology practice to be active on social media, as patients want to conduct research not only about the various services offered but also about the dermatologists who handle those services.

DERMATOLOGY CROSSES EVERY DEMOGRAPHIC, JUST AS SOCIAL MEDIA DOES

According to a survey conducted by Statista in 2018, Americans are visiting dermatologists at every age. At least 16 percent of respondents between the ages of 18 and 29 visited a dermatologist within the past 12 months. Within the 30 to 49 age category, that number was 12.91 percent, and within the 50 to 65 age category, it was 15.73 percent.

If people are visiting the dermatologist regularly starting at 18 years old, it means that there are quite a few age demographics that have to be considered when marketing.

Just as dermatology crosses the various demographics, so does social media. This is all the more reason to examine which social media platforms cater to which demographics. For example, both men and women alike will use social media, though there are more women on Facebook and Instagram with more men on Twitter and TikTok. The users vary by age group more than anything, which is what is particularly noteworthy.

PATIENTS WANT WAYS TO LEARN ABOUT DERMATOLOGISTS AND SERVICES

On social media, people are able to read reviews and interact with patients who have left the reviews. It is a more authentic way of learning about dermatology. Many people hesitate to read reviews on a doctor's website because there is no authentication. People may question whether the reviews are made by real people or if the doctor made up the reviews.

People will conduct their own research in a number of ways:

- Join groups
- Ask questions
- Read reviews
- Study pages from dermatologists local to their area.

Some patients may do their research using one method, while another may use all of them.

People are naturally curious. Patients want to ask questions. This includes everything from what a certain service does to what the potential side effects of a procedure are going to be. This is when social engagement is vital. Dermatologists need to build relationships with their audience so that they can address patients' concerns. Social media allows dermatologists to establish a loyal client base as people learn that their dermatologist is available to talk to them.

It is important to be present where everyone is interacting and gathering information. People are already exploring dermatology services without being told that they need them. Whether they have skin problems, a hair or nail disorder, or a potential skin cancer, most people already know that they need to see a dermatologist. The real question is who are they going to choose?

By having a broad presence on social media, the social media savvy dermatologist has the opportunity to be a part of the conversation and give people insight they need into a variety of dermatology services. Such dermatologists can talk to prospective patients about who they are and how their practice may be able to help. More importantly, maintaining a strong digital presence through social media will make it easier to gain reviews from past patients. All of this can ensure that future patients have the ability to learn about the kind of experience they can expect when they choose you as their dermatologist.

However, it is good to keep in mind that not all conversations need to take place on every social media platform. Consider the demographics to decide where the most effective social media presence should be. Dermatology practices with a patient base over the age of 40 might want to be on Facebook and Instagram. Those who have patients under the age of 30 might want to add TikTok and even Snapchat to their list of platforms.

EXISTING PATIENTS WANT ACCESS TO AN ENTIRE COMMUNITY

It is important to join various groups. Particularly on Facebook, groups are created for virtually everything. Consider the services that your practice focuses on the most, for example cancer prescreening, psoriasis, or acne. Now, take a look at the various Facebook groups that focus on those things. As people ask questions regarding these services, answer them. Whether the people asking the questions are in your area or not, answer. This will lead to more people trusting you, and you never know when people are willing to travel simply to feel more comfortable with the doctor they are going to work with.

Many of your existing patients want access to a community, and they will turn to social media to get it. If they see you interacting in a positive way, they will be quick to interact with those who are considering you, and they will promote you in a number of ways.

Most dermatology patients develop relationships with their dermatologists because skin issues recur all the time. The modern dermatologist must maintain a strong social media presence so that patients will continue to choose to visit them. Otherwise, if they see another office answering more questions and having a better social media relationship with their patients, they may change offices.

HOW SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS PLAY A VITAL ROLE

Social media has been evolving, and social media influencers are a branch of this marketing tool. In fact, according to Forbes, influencer marketing is expected to

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reach \$15 billion by 2022. Influencers are seemingly present everywhere—Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and more. Some mention brands because they are paid to do so while others may provide their insight based on their own unbiased observations.

Influencers could easily talk about dermatology, and if they are being influenced by the competition, you need to know. Over 70 percent of influencers will share the names of products, companies, and brands—even if they are not being paid to do so.

The question is becoming: Can patients trust social media influencers? In most instances, the answer is yes. Men and women alike are persuaded by these influencers, though the demographic is on the younger side.

REACH YOUR PATIENTS

Understanding all of this will help you to broaden your social media reach. Whether you want to explore teaming up with an influencer or not, you need to define your patient demographic and ensure you are present on the various platforms that will reach your patients. ■

For tips on social media and internet marketing or SEO, call 855-598-3320 to speak with Naren Arulrajah. As President and CEO of Ekwa Marketing, he has been a leader in medical marketing for over a decade. Ekwa provides comprehensive marketing solutions for busy dermatologists, with a team of more than 180 full time professionals, providing web design, hosting, content creation, social media, reputation management, SEO, and more.