HOW TO BUILD A STRONG
ONLINE BRAND

The Doctor's Guide to the Internet

Rendia

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The Anatomy of a Strong Online Brand

72% of Internet users have looked online for health information within the past year

69% of U.S. adults now use social media, many for health-related purposes

84% of patients use online reviews to evaluate doctors
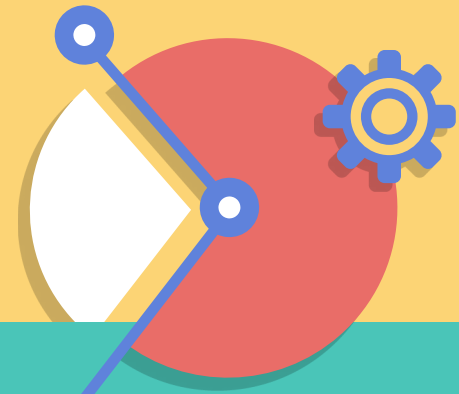
Perhaps there was a time when all doctors needed to do to fill their practice with patients was to hang out a shingle, take out an ad in the Yellow Pages, and wait for word-of-mouth from satisfied patients to spread. Times have changed.

These days virtually everyone, even older patients, uses the Internet to access health care information and find providers. Pew Research Center found that 72 percent of Internet users said they had looked online for health information within the past year – and that was in 2013. The numbers have only increased since then. **Doctors without a website—or those lacking an attractive, easy-to-use, and mobile-friendly one—will be left behind**.

Nearly as many people now use social media, too, such as Facebook and Twitter. Today, 69 percent of U.S. adults are social media users, according to Pew. Many of them are looking to social networks for health-related information, whether it's looking up consumer reviews of doctors, posting about their own or their families' health care experiences, or looking for other people who share their health issues. **Doctors who aren't part of the conversation on social media are missing out on a valuable opportunity**.

Speaking of consumer reviews, many doctors are unaware that their patients are reviewing them online. Do you know what your patients are saying about you on Yelp, Google, Healthgrades, and even your practice's own Facebook page? A 2016 survey found that 84 percent of patients use online reviews to evaluate doctors, and 77 percent use online reviews as their first step in finding a new doctor. **Ignoring online reviews of your practice is a mistake**.

We know that for most doctors who aren't on top of their online presence, it isn't due to a lack of concern or effort. The bottom line is, your time is better spent treating patients than researching SEO strategies and managing Facebook comments without incurring HIPAA violations. That's why we've done much of the work for you.

This eBook will teach you do's and don'ts for your practice's website, how to use social media effectively, and tips for handling online patient reviews and feedback while avoiding common pitfalls.

The key to managing your medical practice's online brand and protecting your professional reputation is to take an active, educated role and leverage the right strategies and tools to meet your goals and better serve your patients.

1 Do's and Don'ts for Your Medical Practice Website

What's the first step most people take when looking for a new doctor? Going online. Your website is your virtual front door, and the first impression most patients—or prospective patients—will get of your practice. Here's how to make sure it's a good one.

▶ Keep it Simple and Mobile-Friendly

The best websites are fairly basic: a header at the top with a navigation bar below it, the content in the middle, and a footer on every page. Skip the fancy graphics and backgrounds, since slow-loading sites can turn off impatient visitors. One survey found that 40 percent of customers will abandon a website that takes more than three seconds to load. Your site should also be easy to navigate on any device.

Nearly 60 percent of all searches now originate on mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets.

Health is the second-highest category for mobile search volume at 62 percent, according to industry sources. (Food and beverage comes in first at 72 percent.) Keys to a mobile-friendly website include making it easy to view on a smaller screen and putting contact info front and center for on-the-go visitors. Make directions, parking info, and what types of insurance you accept prominent on your site as well.

▶ Use Video

Visual content is king these days. For both marketing your practice and educating patients, using video on your website is a smart move. Statistics show that:

4X as many customers would rather watch a video about a product or service than read about it.

53% of smartphone users feel more favorable towards companies whose mobile sites or apps provide instructional video content.

55% of people consume video content thoroughly, meaning they stay on your site longer.

51% of marketing professionals worldwide name video as the type of content with the best ROI.

Our own research has shown that narrated animations, such as Rendia videos, are the best way to communicate complex health information to patients, while improving perception of care and even referrals. Offering a playlist of videos on your website adds visual appeal and shows that your practice is tech-savvy, without the increased page-loading time that extraneous graphics will add.

▶ Consider SEO

Another reason to use video is that it can improve your website's search engine optimization (SEO). SEO is a big buzzword these days, but avoid the temptation to hire a company that promises to catapult your practice to the top of search results—it's not guaranteed or necessary.

There are several steps you can take to improve your SEO on your own, such as:

» **INCORPORATE VIDEOS** as appropriate throughout your website. Be sure to include a short text description or provide context (e.g. "watch this video about refractive errors") to help Google's web-crawling software better understand what is on your website. Rendia videos are designed to improve your SEO.

» **CONSIDER BLOGGING** to increase your visibility and attract and engage patients. Designate a staffer or freelancer to write regular posts (at least one a week), and consider having a couple months' worth of content ready to go before launching your blog.

» **OPTIMIZE YOUR POSTS** with specific keywords that will draw qualified traffic to your website. Google's Keyword Planner is a free tool that allows you to search for relevant keywords.

» **REGULARLY PUBLISH** engaging, high-quality content that establishes you as an expert in your specialty, such as Rendia videos branded with your practice's name.

CHAPTER 1 RECAP

✓ Searching online is most patients' first step when looking for a new doctor

✓ 40% of customers will abandon a website that takes more than three seconds to load

✓ Nearly 60% of searches originate on mobile devices

✓ Health is the category with the second-highest mobile search volume, at 62%

✓ Four times as many customers would rather watch a video about a product or service than read about it

✓ 55% of people consume video content thoroughly, meaning they stay on your site longer

✓ Narrated animations are the best tool for improving patient education and perception of care

✓ Using video on your website can boost SEO

2 Savvy Use of **Social Media**
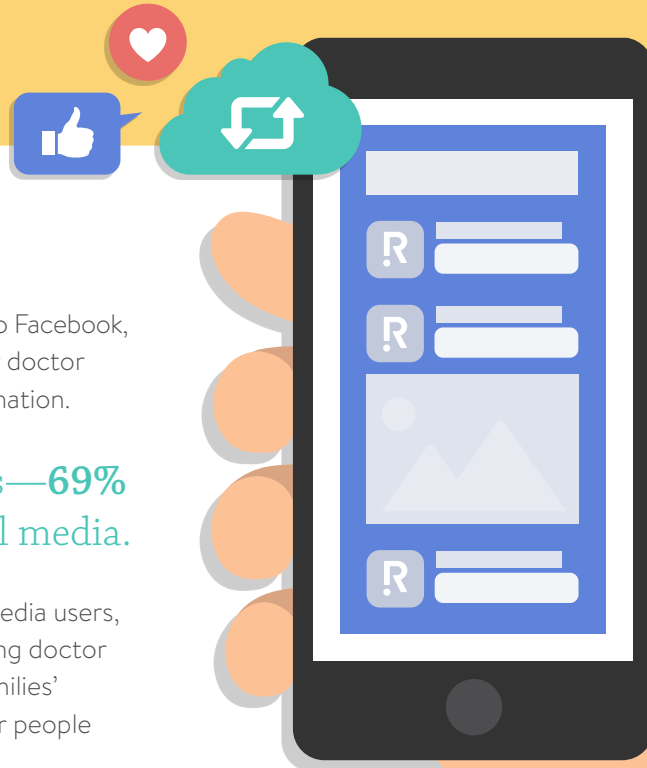
An increasing number of people are turning to Facebook, Twitter, and other social media platforms for doctor recommendations and health-related information.

Nearly seven in ten Americans—**69%** of U.S. adults—now use social media.

Today, 69 percent of U.S. adults are social media users, according to Pew. Many of them are browsing doctor reviews, posting about their own or their families' health care experiences, or looking for other people who share their health issues.

▶ Social Media is the New Word-of-Mouth

If you assume many of those people are Millennials, you're right. But even if your patients are mostly Gen-Xers or Baby Boomers, you still can't afford to ignore social media. Pew reports that:

86% of **18- TO 29-YEAR-OLDS** are social media users

80% of **30- TO 49-YEAR-OLDS** are social media users

64% of **50- TO 64-YEAR-OLDS** are social media users

And while only about one-third (34 percent) of Americans age 65 and older currently use social media, that figure has grown dramatically in recent years. Today's tech-savvy seniors—or "Silver Surfers"—are turning to the Internet and social media to research doctors and health concerns, just like younger patients. For many people, Facebook is the new word-of-mouth. Of those viewing health information on social media, researchers at PwC found that:

» **42%** are looking at health-related consumer reviews
» **32%** are reading or posting about their friends' and families' health experiences
» **24%** are viewing health-related videos or images posted by patients

▶ Why Doctors Are Embracing Social Media

Doctors have been slow to embrace social media. Many assume it's a waste of time. However, those who have engaged with platforms like Twitter and Facebook, or professional networking sites like Sermo and Doximity, have found just the opposite. These doctors will tell you that social media is just a different—and more efficient—way to connect with colleagues and patients and stay on top of important topics in medicine. Even just creating a LinkedIn profile will get your name to appear higher in Google search results, no engagement necessary.

Be aware that even if you haven't yet set up a Facebook page for your practice, an unofficial or "unmanaged" one could already exist—with patient reviews on it. For instance, when someone checks into a place that doesn't have a Facebook page, an unmanaged page is created to represent the location. Do a Facebook search of your practice to find out if this is the case. If so, you can request to claim the page and become its administrator, and you can also merge the page into a page you already manage for your practice. Facebook Help Center walks you through the process.

Social media offers another potential benefit that many doctors haven't considered: the opportunity to reshape the narrative about health care and humanize themselves in the process, says Kevin Pho, M.D., social media expert and founder of KevinMD.com.

Some providers see social media as an extension of the doctor-patient relationship. When doctors get involved with social media, it gives them another opportunity to reach patients and impact the decisions people make about their health.

An easy way to get started with social media and enhance your online presence is by posting high-quality patient education videos to your practice's social media sites. Rendia allows you to promote your practice's brand with a personalized watermark and practice profile displayed alongside every video you share.

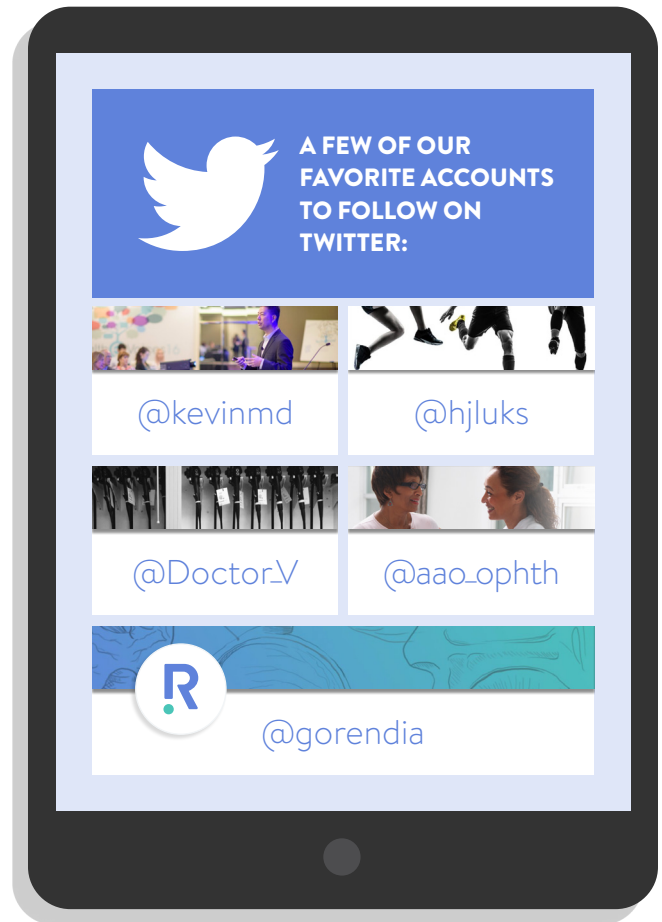This video walks you through the process: **Tutorial: Getting Started with Rendia on Social Media**

Understandably, many doctors fear that being active on social media will get them into hot water with HIPAA. While we will go into more detail in Chapter 4, some general rules of thumb are to keep personal and practice profiles separate on social media, and to address patients as a group rather than individually.

To find out how health care providers including Mayo Clinic are using Periscope, Snapchat, Figure1, and more, read How Doctors Are Using the Latest **Social Media Channels.**

Quick tips to get started on social media:

» **DECIDE ON A GOAL** for your social media use. Is it educating patients? Professional networking? Improving your status in search results? That will determine where to focus your time and efforts.

» **CREATE A LINKEDIN** profile to come up higher in search results. Here's how.

» **SEARCH FOR AND CLAIM** any unmanaged Facebook pages for your practice. Here's how.

» **GO ON TWITTER** to see what people have to say. Search topics and hashtags that interest you. You may want to set up an account yourself, but you don't have to. Here's how to get started on Twitter.

» **CONSIDER POSTING** branded patient education videos to your practice's social media sites. Here's how with Rendia.

A FEW OF OUR FAVORITE ACCOUNTS TO FOLLOW ON TWITTER:

@kevinmd

@hjluks

@Doctor_V

@aao_ophth

@gorendia

CHAPTER 2 RECAP

✓ 69% of U.S. adults are social media users

✓ Of those, 24% are viewing health-related videos or images posted by patients

✓ Doctors who use social media can reshape the conversation about health care and humanize themselves to patients in the process

✓ Posting high-quality patient education videos on social media enhances your online presence and promotes your practice

3 **Managing** Your Online Ratings and Reviews

A recent survey found that **84 percent of patients use online reviews to evaluate doctors**, reported *Healthcare Informatics*. The survey also found that 77 percent of patients use online reviews as their first step in finding a new doctor.

Further illustrating the impact of online reviews, nearly half of respondents (47 percent) said they would consider going to an out-of-network doctor—despite the additional cost to the patients—if their reviews were better than those of an in-network doctor.

▶ Most Popular Doctor Review and Ratings Sites

There are more than 400 websites dedicated to consumers' feedback of their experiences in doctors' offices, according to the *American Journal of Managed Care*. While it changes all the time, **Yelp is currently the number-one choice for finding doctors**, according to numerous sources.

In an editorial published in January 2017 in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, Dr. Vivian Lee, dean of the University of Utah School of Medicine, noted that "with more than 102 million customer reviews to date, 6 percent of them in the health care arena, Yelp easily dwarfs longer-standing commercial physician-review sites such as Healthgrades and Vitals." Other popular doctor review sites include ZocDoc and RateMDs. And don't overlook reviews on Google and on your practice's Facebook page.

SEO experts agree that user-generated content, such as reviews, is **heavily weighted by search engines**. This means reviews are often the first thing a patient sees when they type a doctor's name into a search engine.

▶ Why Doctors Shouldn't Fear Online Reviews

Clearly, patients think online reviews are important. Many doctors, however, are unaware of their reviews. Some are downright fearful or resentful of them. These doctors argue that rating patient satisfaction with health care on the same site as consumers rate restaurants and contractors is unfair and even dangerous.

Here's the bad news: there's nothing you can do to avoid online reviews of your practice. **Ignoring or dismissing reviews only makes you seem out-of-touch or defensive**. And patients notice: 60 percent of respondents to a Software Advice survey feel it's "very" or "moderately important" for doctors to post a response to negative reviews. We will discuss the proper way to respond in Chapter 4.

Here's the good news: most patients aren't leaving bad reviews. According to the same survey, a combined **50 percent of patients report leaving "very positive" or "somewhat positive" online reviews about a doctor**, while 13 percent write "neutral" reviews. Only six percent of respondents write "very" or "somewhat negative" reviews.

▶ How to Get Better Online Reviews

More good news: for every patient who had a dissatisfying experience, there is one with nothing but good things to say about your practice. The best way to ensure that prospective patients will ignore one or two negative reviews is to ensure that there are five or 10 good reviews alongside them.

Encourage patients, especially longtime or highly satisfied ones, to post reviews. *Medical Economics* reported that 70 percent of consumers will leave a review for a business if asked. You can ask patients in person, put up a sign in your waiting room, or use these Rendia videos in your email marketing, on your website, and on your social media pages:

G
Review Us on Google

✴
Find Us on Yelp

f
Like Us on Facebook

CHAPTER 3 RECAP

✔ 84% of patients use online reviews to evaluate doctors

✔ 77% use online reviews as their first step in finding a new doctor

✔ 47% would consider going to an out-of-network doctor if their reviews were better than those of an in-network doctor

✔ Yelp is currently the number-one site for finding doctors

✔ User-generated content such as reviews improves SEO, so reviews are often the first thing a patient sees when they type a doctor's name into a search engine

✔ Ignoring or dismissing reviews only makes you seem out-of-touch or defensive

✔ 50% of patients report leaving positive online reviews about a doctor

✔ 70% of consumers will review a business if asked

✔ Encourage satisfied patients to post reviews; including Rendia videos on your website, social media pages, and emails is an easy way to do so

4 Guidelines for Avoiding Online Pitfalls

Promoting and protecting your practice's brand online doesn't have to be daunting if you avoid these six common pitfalls.

1. You don't know what people are saying about you.

If you haven't Googled your practice, you should. After all, that's what most patients will do. Since your search results are based on Google's profile of you, to simulate what a patient would see, conduct your search in "Incognito mode." Here's how using the Chrome browser.

What comes up? The first page of search results ideally should include your website, contact info, and reviews— preferably good ones—from sites including Yelp, Facebook, Google, ZocDoc, and Healthgrades. Don't like what you see? Refer back to Chapter 3.

Be sure to do a search for individual doctor names, too, as well as your practice's name. To automate this process, set up Google Alerts so that you receive an email every time you or your practice is mentioned online.

2. Patients can't find you.

When someone types the name of your practice into a search bar, the first page of results should include your practice's address, contact info, and a map. Google offers this listing to businesses for free. You must add your business first, and then verify it with a PIN sent to you by Google. This video from Google Small Business walks you through the steps.

Also, create and/or update your profiles on social media sites like LinkedIn, Twitter, and Google+, adding a professional headshot and bio. Those sites tend to come up first in search engine results for a doctor's name.

71% of state medical boards have investigated doctors for violating professionalism online.

Source: Journal of the American Medical Association
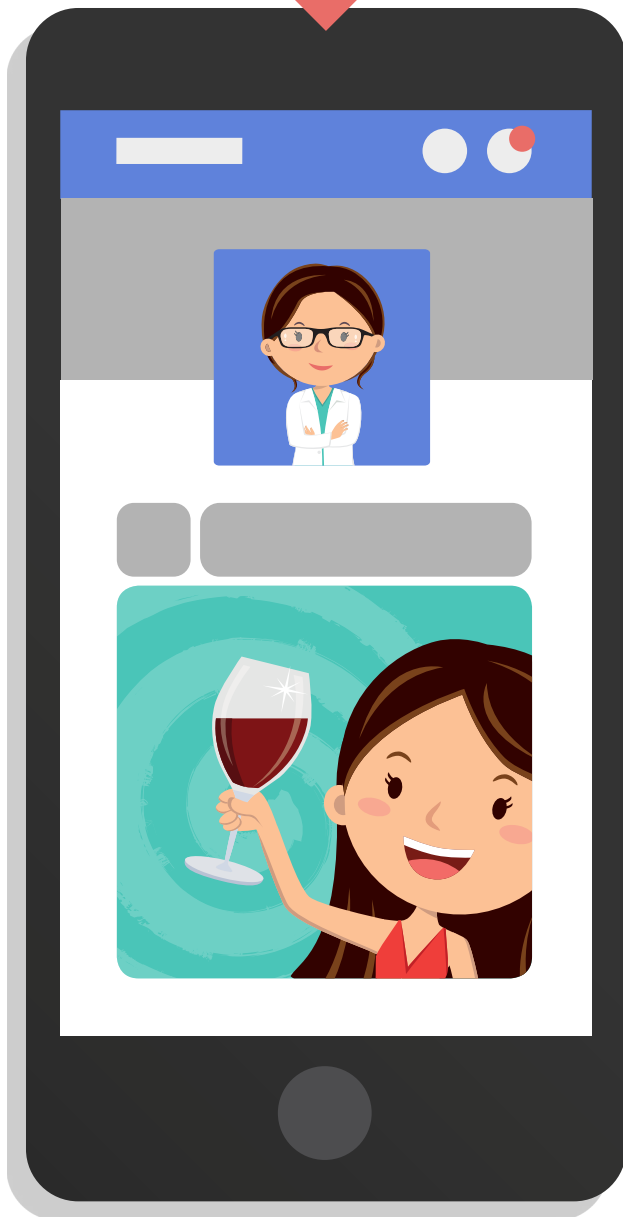
▶ **3.** Your social media use is not always professional.

You can and should try to keep your practice's online presence separate from your personal one. However, you still need to conduct yourself as if anything posted online could be seen by anyone.

Examples of suspect behavior include a doctor posting photos of himself intoxicated, a doctor's blog post that uses potential patient identifiers, and discriminatory language on a doctor's Facebook page.

▶ **4.** You don't respond to online comments.

While not responding to patients online may seem like the safest bet, this can be interpreted negatively. An Oracle study found that 81 percent of Twitter users expect a same-day response from a business. People want to be heard and acknowledged—even if they're sharing a positive experience, but especially if they had a negative experience.

You or a designated staff member should monitor your Twitter mentions and Facebook comments regularly. A free tool like Mention (similar to Google Alerts) can help make sure nothing slips through the cracks. Acknowledge any issue or complaint as soon as possible in general, non-specific terms like, "We're sorry to hear about your recent experience. We do our best to ensure patient satisfaction." It's wise to encourage the patient to contact your office directly, and to take the conversation offline if possible.

▶ 5. You and/or your staff don't fully understand HIPAA laws.

Staying HIPAA compliant on social media can seem like navigating a minefield. We've all heard about HIPAA violations that led to a health care professional being reprimanded, fined, or fired. Step one is to make sure you have a solid social media policy in place.

Second, make sure your entire staff is trained on what they can and cannot post online. Define protected health information (PHI) and review the 18 patient identifiers HIPAA specifies must never be used online. Hint: full-face photos are only one of them.

⬤ For more **HIPAA do's and don'ts**, see HIPAA and Social Media: Avoiding Costly Mistakes.

▶ 6. You are not providing visual content.

By some estimates, video content now represents 74 percent of all Internet traffic, according to Internet trends reports. Facebook posts with images get 2.3 times more engagement than those without images. And visual content is more than 40 times more likely to get shared on social media than other types of content.

If you're not using visual content on your practice's website and social media pages, you're missing the boat. Rendia offers high-quality patient education videos to share with your patients and boost your practice's brand and visibility, as well as your website's SEO. Our videos display a link preview—including the video title and a thumbnail image—when posted to social media, which adds an appealing visual.

CHAPTER 4 RECAP

✓ Set up Google Alerts so that you receive an email every time you or your practice is mentioned online

✓ Set up your free Google Business listing to manage your practice's description, contact info, hours, and location on Google Maps

✓ Create and/or update your profiles on social media sites like LinkedIn, Twitter, and Google+, adding a professional headshot and bio

✓ Conduct yourself professionally even on your personal social media sites, and assume that anything you post online could be seen by anyone

✓ Not responding to online comments can be interpreted negatively: 81% of Twitter users expect a same-day response from a business

✓ Avoid HIPAA violations by drafting a solid social media policy and training staff on PHI and the 18 patient identifiers to avoid online

✓ Video content represents up to 74% of all Internet traffic and gets more engagement on social media; share video to boost your SEO and your brand

Conclusion to How to Build a Strong Online Brand

We know that your patients are your first priority. Your website, social media presence, and online reviews should enhance your practice's reputation, complement the care you provide to patients, and help you attract and retain more of them. **We are here to help.**

Establishing and maintaining a strong online brand does not have to be overwhelming, expensive, or time-consuming. Hopefully, reading this eBook has inspired you to take some easy steps to improve what you're already doing.

Ready to take the next step and upgrade your online presence, patient education, and practice marketing efforts with video? **» SCHEDULE A DEMO WITH US TODAY to learn more about how Rendia can help.**

If you're already a customer, let's talk about how to leverage our tools to get your practice the best results possible. Not only will you benefit, but your patients will as well.

About Rendia

Rendia is educational software that blends stunning clinical artwork with interactive technology to help medical professionals and patients understand each other better. By bridging the communication gap between doctors and patients, Rendia empowers patients to make informed health decisions and experience better outcomes.

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