

## **Just Tell me: Yes or No: Should Our Medical Practice Be On Facebook?!?**

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PUBLIC RELATIONS  
AND MARKETING

Providers wrestling with "the Facebook question" know that many of their peers are already on Facebook and many more are not. They are concerned that they don't have the resources to implement and maintain a FB page. They wonder if it will help them grow their practice in the end. Last, and actually least important, some have absolutely no idea how to make it happen.

In that boat? Answer the questions below and I suspect you'll know by the end of the page whether or not to get on board.

### 1. Who is your targeted audience?

These are the people you hope will find you, like you, and look at your posts (the notes you leave for all to see.) Current and prospective patients are the primary audiences for most practices. Some hope potential employees will stop by. There may be other groups on your practice's wish list.

### 2. Do these people use Facebook with any regularity?

Do not gauge the popularity of Facebook by your own usage. If you are 55-64, you comprise only about 7% of all FB users. In contrast, 65% of all FB users are aged 13-34. Add ages 35-44, and it climbs to 81%. That's 81% of approximately 200 million active users in the U.S.

If your intended readers are under 45, you should seriously consider having a presence here, where they frequent. Many of them now do all their online messaging on FB instead of via email. They go there often. An internist whose patients are into their 40's is a maybe. I wouldn't waste my time or money if I seek the attention of those over 50. At least not this week: the numbers, though, are growing exponentially.

### 3. Do you have something to say?

I bet you do even if you don't know it. Share a health tip of the day or news about recent research in health or fitness. You can provide a convenient link to any online news story. Consider time-sensitive information: today's pollen levels, sports physicals reminders, an air pollution alert in our valley. Office news? Please welcome our new nurse practitioner. Link your post to your web site.

Be sure you are posting non-confidential health information. Be professional always. Stay away from politics and controversy. The rule is: when in doubt, don't post it.

### 4. Do you have anyone to make this happen?

A Facebook page is easy to set up. You probably already have FB amateur experts in your office, and FB has step-by-step how-to guides designed for beginners. If you have to, bring in someone.

Posting doesn't take much time, and even once or twice a week is better than nothing. Someone on staff can probably manage this, especially if you have an idea suggestion box in the break room. Your nephew the journalism major would probably do it for beer money. You can always hire a professional.

Very important: The quality of your FB posts, as with every form of communication from your office, must reflect the excellence of the medical care you deliver. It is absolutely critical that you lay out the rules in detail and check every post immediately. And, as with all marketing tactics, this should be part of an overall strategic plan to achieve clear goals. How will you drive people to your page? How will you track the results?

The FB boat has sailed, but if it's a trip you should take, you can still catch it.  
Next: Twitter, anyone?

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