

ANNUAL HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION REPORT **2018:**

Engaging a Market in Transition





This year's survey polled 734 physicians, nurse practitioners and physician assistants.

Family Practice, Pediatrics, Internal Medicine, General Surgery, Obstetrics & Gynecology, Dermatology, Cardiology, Oncology, Neurology, Podiatry, Epidemiology, Gastroenterology, Hematology, Nephrology, Urology, Rheumatology and Otolaryngology.

Introduction

The relationships life sciences firms and insurance payers establish with medical professionals are crucial for business growth and improved healthcare outcomes alike. Developing those relationships, however, is a complex and often challenging process that demands strategic thinking. As the results from the annual HealthLink Dimensions Healthcare Professional Communication Survey demonstrate, agile, well-informed marketing and communications lay the groundwork for more productive interactions.

This year's survey polled 734 physicians, nurse practitioners and physician assistants to give life science organizations, insurance companies and other organizations deeper insight into healthcare professionals' needs and preferences. Survey respondents practice in the following areas: Family Practice, Pediatrics, Internal Medicine, General Surgery, Obstetrics & Gynecology, Dermatology, Cardiology, Oncology, Neurology, Podiatry, Epidemiology, Gastroenterology, Hematology, Nephrology, Urology, Rheumatology and Otolaryngology.

The study's findings demonstrate the value of data-driven online communications in forming connections, especially when representatives focus on providing quality educational materials for both physicians and patients. Life sciences organizations and payers should seek out opportunities to deliver carefully formulated and directed messaging that supports the work of doctors and empowers patients. Marketing and sales teams can point the way to improved clinical results and fuel growth in their own organizations by always prioritizing the requirements of doctors and the people they serve.



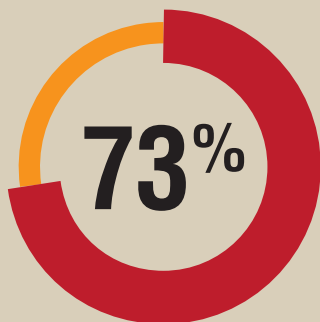
Medical education programs are the most popular communications, preferred by 77 PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS.

Educational materials are key to engaging physicians

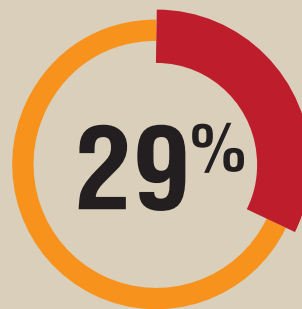
One of the most basic questions representatives from life sciences firms and payers must consider is what materials are likely to capture a medical professional's interest. Doctors rely on quality information backed by clinical evidence, often drawn from online resources. Among survey respondents, seven out of 10 said they consulted UpToDate, with medical journal websites and WebMD also ranking as frequent destinations.

It's no surprise, then, that the study shows medical professionals appreciate further opportunities to learn more about the latest treatment options and innovations. Announcements about continuing medical education programs are the most popular communications, preferred by 77 percent of respondents. Many professionals welcome news of product approvals, prescribing updates and invitations to industry-sponsored educational events as well.

- continued next page



**of respondents
said they PREFER EMAIL**



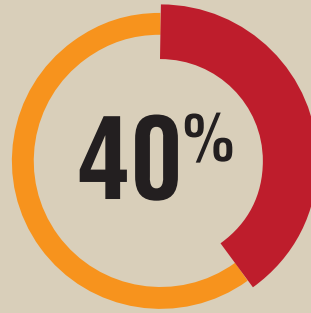
**of respondents said they used
social media to communicate
with other professionals**

Educational materials are key to engaging physicians - continued

However, for any of this information to connect with audiences, companies first have to engage providers through the right channels. Tightening rules governing access for representatives have made it increasingly difficult for representatives to initiate in-person contact with healthcare providers over recent years. Meanwhile, survey results show that while a majority of medical professionals see value in social media, most still aren't employing these channels for professional purposes: Just under 29 percent of respondents said they used social media to communicate with other professionals, while less than 4 percent communicate with patients in this way.

When receiving industry news, product updates and announcements or research and educational opportunities from life sciences businesses or insurance payers, 73 percent of respondents said they prefer email. Consistent findings over the past few years show that email has become firmly established as the most convenient and effective method for directly providing physicians with information. Many healthcare professionals are consuming information via email while on the go. Half of respondents stated smartphones are their primary device for reading email, therefore, organizations can get those communications across by gearing content to suit physicians' preferences and optimizing for mobile devices.

OVER 40 PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS said they don't check or correct their listings in online physician directories



Organizations should step up their communications efforts

Businesses that are striving to establish more contacts among healthcare providers and enhance the relationships they already have should start by taking a closer look at their email communications strategy. That starts with ensuring that marketing and sales teams have access to databases with accurate, current contact information. Over 40 percent of respondents said they don't check or correct their listings in online physician directories, and 32.5 percent said they found at least some discrepancies.

While doctors receive a great deal of email, that doesn't necessarily mean they're getting all the information they need. Physicians are particularly interested in hearing more from insurance carriers, PPO networks and Pharmacy Benefits Manager plans, with over 72 percent saying they would like more frequent updates and 52.7 percent citing email as the most efficient way of getting in touch. Based on responses

to the same question from previous two years, healthcare professionals do not feel payer communication has improved. Respondents say they still want to hear more about drug formulary coverage and co-pay schedules as well as reimbursement fee schedules. This insight may indicate an opportunity for payers and pharmaceutical organizations to partner together to keep physicians informed on drug formulary coverage.

For all organizations involved in healthcare, there may be opportunities to get to know these audiences better and develop more appealing initiatives. Just under 41 percent of medical professionals said they are open to participating in market research. Consider leveraging digital channels like online surveys or email campaigns to recruit for these efforts and gather the intelligence to inform your business's next steps.



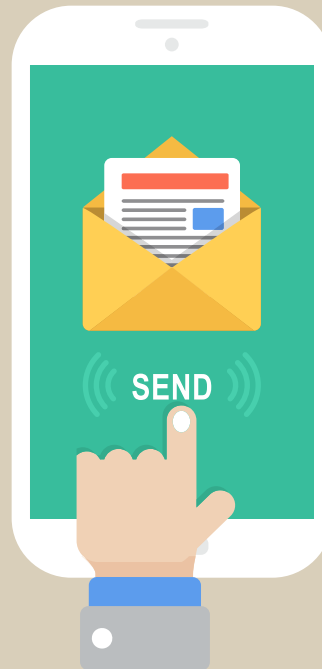
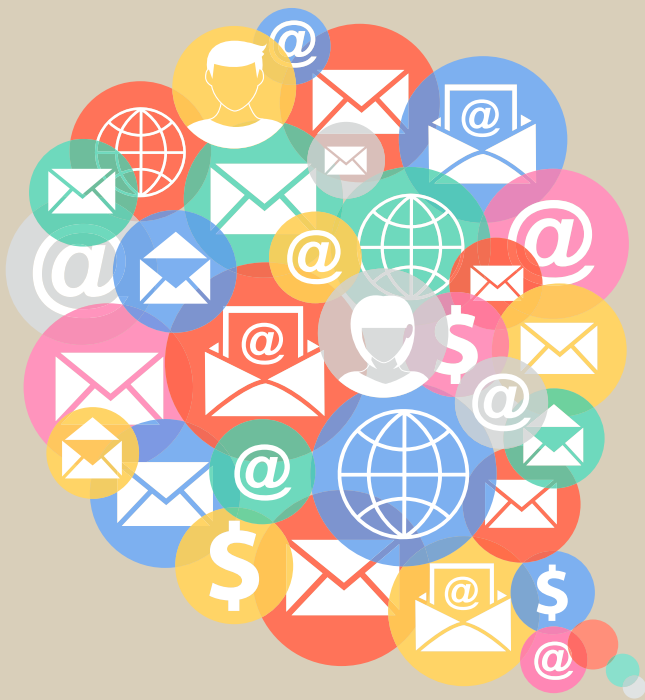
THE VAST MAJORITY OF PROVIDERS, AT 87 PERCENT, said they now believe wearable devices have the potential to improve patient care and medical outcomes.

The right information enables patient empowerment

Along with keeping physicians themselves in the loop, organizations can deepen engagement by offering resources that assist in educating patients and promoting treatment adherence. In the survey, 78.6 percent of respondents said they used the education and support materials provided by healthcare companies and patient advocacy groups. These initiatives are becoming especially vital as healthcare takes on a value-based approach, and more than 68 percent of respondents said they welcome efforts from pharmaceutical and medical device companies to promote better patient outcomes, such as patient assistance programs, patient education resources and apps.

Providers expressed interest in a variety of patient support, with disease state educational materials in the greatest demand and resources on prescription drugs or medical devices also likely to see extensive use. Respondents said they would most frequently give out printed materials they could keep on-hand in their offices, but online channels were popular options as well. Organizations can optimize educational efforts by offering references to both industry-sponsored websites with product-specific guidance and independent sites for broader context.

One of the most promising avenues for organizations involved in patient education is the use of wearable devices, such as fitness trackers. Medical professionals expressed a growing interest in how this technology could be employed to involve patients more actively in their own care and track chronic conditions. The vast majority of providers, at 87.25 percent, said they now believe wearable devices have the potential to improve patient care and medical outcomes.



Conclusion

The results of the HealthLink Dimensions annual survey of healthcare professionals reveal that the opportunities for building better relationships lie in doing more to adapt communications to fit the needs of doctors and their patients. Especially in the era of value-based care and growing adoption of wearable devices for monitoring well-being, organizations should concentrate on building customized engagement efforts based in reliable data.

Pharmaceutical, medical device and insurance companies can use carefully targeted email campaigns and educational efforts to establish the strong connections that bring benefits for both care and for the bottom line. Making these efforts a success starts with delivering forward-looking messaging by taking advantage of accurate contact information and data-driven segmentation.



Empowered Healthcare Intelligence

www.healthlinkdimensions.com

6 Concourse Parkway

Suite 1000

Atlanta, Georgia 30328

404.250.3900