

Physician Internet Use



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In the ever-evolving pharmaceutical market, access to information will always be a key need. Either from the point of view of the physician, the patient, or product manager—we are all seeking more information and requiring it at a faster pace. One of the key sources of information is, of course, the internet. To get an understanding of physicians' current Internet usage, Prism Healthcare Intelligence recently checked the pulse of MDs across Canada.

This survey was completed between October to December 2006, by 1,000 physicians across a variety of specialties. The results are considered accurate to within ± 3.4 percentage points, 19 times out of 20 times.

The key finding was that the number of websites that physicians commonly refer to was only 2.4. With all the different aspects of their practice, this number was expected to be higher. This number was a little higher for specialists. We asked for the three websites that physicians most often used. The top 12 sites mentioned are listed in Table 1. Clearly the Canadian Medical Association (CMA) is the most popular. Over 75 websites were offered and a complete listing can be viewed at www.prismresearch.ca. Most notable by its absence from this list is mention of any pharmaceutical company or brand sites.

Table 1

Most commonly used websites by physicians

Website	%
1. CMA	15.5%
2. UpToDate	8.1%
3. WebMD	6.4%
4. MedScape	5.9%
5. OMA	4.7%
6. MdConsult	3.7%
7. PubMed	3.4%
8. NEJM	2.7%
9. Emedicine	2.7%
10. CPS	2.7%
11. CFPC	2.7%
12. MedLine	2.5%

Many of these websites have physician-only access portals, some with a paid subscription. These sites require a user name and password combination to have access. Currently physicians have 1.8 user IDs and passwords and regularly use 1.6 of them. With increasing scrutiny on direct-to-consumer initiatives and ethical promotions, restricting the public from physician information is an increasing need.

One constant irritant is remembering different password combinations given by the various website administrators. Access with a universal user ID and password combination for all physician related websites was requested by 62% of the physicians surveyed.

This survey suggests that any new websites created will have a hard time breaking into physicians' regular use and generally, websites need clinical insights and reference material on a wide range of topics to be popular. Pharma sponsored sites may have a variety of purposes, but may often be too focused or with a specific use in mind.

So we may ask, are physicians typical consumers and typical Internet users? Investing in this medium is certainly trendy—just make sure you understand your customer's needs, know their comfort using the Internet and provide enough bells and whistles to keep them coming back. **CPM**

Prism Healthcare Intelligence is a pharmaceutical market research company specializing in online surveys and qualitative interviews. For more information about this survey or other Prism capabilities, please contact pchalkley@prismresearch.ca or visit www.prismresearch.ca