



## Volume 6 / Issue 3 / 2011 - Cover Story

### Healthcare and Social Media



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**This issue's cover story focuses on social media and healthcare. Already indispensable to today's younger generation, social media is emerging as a key player in the healthcare sector. Doctors are tweeting during conferences and some even during surgeries while many hospitals are taking advantage of this new technology for marketing purposes. Indeed, social media has become such an integral part of the healthcare sector that there are conferences dedicated to it. One such conference was the doctors 2.0 & you conference. Our dossier on the topic includes an introduction to the conference by founder Denise Silber and three short articles from three of the presenters: Lucien Engelen, Tim Ringrose and Yossi Bahagon.**

#### **What was the Idea Behind the Creation of the Doctors 2.0 & You Conference?**

As Web 2.0 and Social Media have gained traction in healthcare in recent years, we've been hearing mostly about the use of the Internet by patients and little about the physician perspective. In creating the Doctors 2.0 TM & You conference, we wanted to explore how doctors and patients are using social media, applications and Web 2.0 tools, to work with peers, governments, industry and payers.

Attendees came from all areas of healthcare and from more than 20 countries on the five continents,

although primarily from Europe. We had great feedback and will be returning to Paris in 2012 on May 30-31.

### **Can You Highlight the Trends You Discussed?**

1. The concept of online physician communities is now well established. More doctors than ever are participating and will continue to participate in online communities. It's a painless way for them to extend their own medical experience and feel more re-assured about certain complex cases or rare conditions.
2. While physicians may have some concerns about legal responsibility or even the confidentiality of cases in a community context and various regulatory bodies may want to keep their eye on the communities, none of this is hampering the introduction of new kinds of physician communities. Entrepreneurs, often physicians themselves, are developing international communities, new services, new ways to crowd-source, mobile communities. All undoubtedly thanks to social media itself, which is facilitating contact. However, doctors continue to join for the same primary reason: The attraction of peer-to-peer crowd-sourcing.
3. A more emerging trend is the use of social media tools for patients and physicians by hospitals. The number participating in Europe is smaller than in the US but not insignificant and is growing.
4. Another key trend is mobile health (m-health). The adoption of iPads and other mobile devices by physicians, by hospitals, by medical schools and patients. E-Learning, online reference materials, mobile access to patient data, wireless communicable objects, professional and consumer apps are all growing by leaps and bounds. One of our physician speakers browses through 300 blogs in a few minutes, thanks to RSS feeds he accesses on a table.
5. The main social media platforms such as Facebook (FB) and Twitter have now become healthcare social media. Physician professional associations and regulatory bodies are telling doctors not to "friend" their patients; others consider that FB and Twitter can be acceptable and even attractive vehicles for physician-patient communication, despite the security, confidentiality, responsibility issues they raise. As for Twitter, there are practically round the clock tweet-ups, depending on the hashtag subject and location or language of interest and physicians are tweeting during congresses.
6. We also saw how a single payer-based health system can package a suite of tools and services to impact the entire healthcare process from diagnosis to treatment to online support. This is the case of Clalit in Israel. Unfortunately, while it is a hope for many to do similar things, that hope does not yet make a trend.
7. As for start-ups, the trend is also towards diversification of the delivery platform. Mobile apps are taking a growing share of those businesses. And of course, we saw that new business models in healthcare social media and web 2.0 are still in their early stages but the trend is toward a growing number of start-ups in healthcare.

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