

Docs often use social media on the job: survey

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They seek medical information, peer contact online.

(HealthDay)—About one in four U.S. doctors uses social media daily to scan or explore medical information, according to a new study.

The survey of nearly 500 cancer specialists (oncologists) and primary-care doctors also found that 14 percent contribute new information via social media each day, said the researchers at the Johns Hopkins Kimmel Cancer Center in Baltimore.

Sixty-one percent of the doctors said they use social media once a week or more to look for information, and 46 percent said they contribute new information once a week or more, according to the study, which appeared recently in the *Journal of Medical Internet Research*.

More than half of the respondents said they use only physician-only communities and only 7 percent said they use Twitter.

Oncologists were more likely to use social media to keep up with innovation, while primary-care doctors were more likely to use social media to get in touch with and learn from peers, the survey found.

Nearly 60 percent of the [respondents](#) said social media is beneficial, engaging and a good way to keep current on high-quality information. They also said social media helps them care for patients more efficiently and improves the quality of care they provide.

The surveys were conducted more than a year and a half ago, so it's likely that more doctors are using social media now, said study author Dr. Robert Miller, an assistant professor of oncology and [oncology medical information](#).

Miller noted that there is rapid growth in the amount of information required for [medical practice](#), and social media provides a good way for doctors to keep current.

"What did surprise us was the heavy use of online physician-only communities," Miller said in a Johns Hopkins Medicine news release. "It's possible that many physicians feel more comfortable with that type of social media instead of a more [public space](#) like [Twitter](#) or Facebook."

Further research is needed to find out how social media affects doctors' knowledge, attitudes, skills and behaviors, Miller said.

More information: Here is the American Medical Association's policy about [doctors' use of social media](#).

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