

# Half of US plastic surgeons market their practice via social media

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Half of U.S. plastic surgeons are using Facebook, Twitter and other social media platforms in their professional practice, according to a survey in the May issue of *Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery*, the official medical journal of the American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS).

"Social media platforms represent a dynamic and powerful tool to educate, engage, market to and directly communicate with patients and professional colleagues," writes ASPS Member Surgeon Dr. Reza Jarrahy and colleagues of University of California, Los Angeles. However, researchers add that for plastic surgeons, "The potential benefits associated with using this tool must be balanced against its potential pitfalls."

## Plastic Surgeons Report Engagement in Social Media...

The researchers sent an [anonymous survey](#) to more than 5,000 ASPS Member Surgeons. Responses from 500 surgeons provided information on their use of social media in plastic surgery practice, their reasons for using it and the perceived benefits and risks.

A little more than 50 percent of plastic surgeons said they regularly used social media for their [professional practice](#). Facebook was by far the most popular platform, followed by LinkedIn, [Twitter](#) and YouTube. Surgeons who primarily perform cosmetic plastic surgery are more likely to use social media.

When asked their reasons for using social media, most plastic surgeons responded that incorporating social media into [medical practice](#) was inevitable. About half said that social media was an effective [marketing tool](#) and a useful forum for patient education.

About one-third of plastic surgeons saw positive effects of using social media. They felt it provided

an effective, low-cost means of advertising and increased exposure of their practice. About half believed that engaging in social media led to increased patient referrals and positive feedback.

Few plastic surgeons—1.5 percent—reported negative effects of social media on their practice. Some surgeons had received criticisms or negative commentary from patients via social media, but most thought these criticisms hadn't harmed their practice.

## ...But Feel the Need for Social Media Standards and Guidance

Plastic surgeons who weren't using social media were asked why. They cited reasons including maintaining a sense of professionalism, protecting patient confidentiality and concerns about becoming too accessible.

About one-fourth of respondents felt that the ASPS and other governing bodies "should provide some oversight and/or monitoring of plastic surgeons' use of social media to ensure ethical online behavior."

Social media has revolutionized the way in which people and businesses interact—including a growing role in the health care industry. Although plastic surgeons have been leaders in the development of online interactive content, there has been surprisingly little information on whether and how they are using social media.

The new study shows that many plastic surgeons have joined the social media revolution and believe it has benefited their practice in various ways. However, they also perceive a need for standards of practice and oversight to ensure appropriate and ethical use of social media. Dr. Jarrahy and colleagues conclude, "Because of our current level of engagement with existing social media services, plastic surgeons are uniquely poised to become leaders in developing the future of social media

architecture to the maximal benefit of practitioners and patients alike."

Provided by Wolters Kluwer Health

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