

# Information and the Empowered Patient

## 4 things you should know when planning for 2010

*As the year 2010 approaches, pharmaceutical marketers should consider tactics that allow them to improve their focus on communicating with empowered patients, who are increasingly using online resources to find health information.*

BY AMY COWAN

**M**ore than ever before, patients are taking ownership of their health by seeking reliable information to make the best decisions they can. Increasingly, they're seeking this information through digital channels, video and their social networks.

The Internet is the most turned-to resource for health information, with 65 percent of consumers going online for health-related information.<sup>1</sup> Further, media consumption online is increasing dramatically: 31 percent of consumer time with media is spent online.<sup>2</sup> This shift in behavior provides an opportunity for healthcare marketers to reach patients as they browse the Web for information and search for answers to health-related questions.

Our clients often ask for the most important digital strategies and best practices to reach these empowered patients and communicate with them in a meaningful way. There are four key themes we hope you keep in mind as you plan your strategy for 2010 and beyond: be relevant, authentic, social and insightful.

### **Be relevant: Consumers are looking for health information**

Consumers are looking for relevant health information at every stage of the patient pathway and using sources beyond just their physician. In fact, Manhattan Research recently released a study that shows that more U.S. adults use the Internet rather than asking a doctor when it comes to obtaining

health and medical information. Additionally, the study shows that consumers are much more likely to start their health information gathering process by using a search engine rather than going directly to a Web site.<sup>3</sup>

While the Web is not a substitute for a trained physician, time spent with doctors is limited, which means people search for information on their own. Undiagnosed and untreated patients constitute approximately 84 percent of health searches, which means every search is an opportunity to connect with someone on their health.<sup>4</sup>

And staying relevant means helping consumers find answers when and where it matters most. One platform marketers should look into this year is mobile, which is reaching a real tipping point. Apple has sold more than 17 million iPhones<sup>5</sup> and 10 percent to 11 percent of U.S. adults carry Smartphones.<sup>6</sup> Mobile apps are also taking off for health as consumers are using apps for healthy living, fitness and managing their conditions. Four of the top 10 Android health apps relate to pregnancy.

### **Be authentic: Patients listen to authentic sources**

Tune in to your customers. Video is a powerful tool that allows patients to tell their stories and allows consumers to connect with your brand in an authentic way via patient testimonials. And it's growing at a healthy clip; there has been a 67 percent increase in online video consumption and one of five

consumers watch health videos online. It comes as no surprise that sufferers and caregivers are the most frequent viewers of online health videos.<sup>7</sup>

Over this past year we've seen many pharmaceutical companies use a personalized approach on YouTube. Patient testimonials allow viewers to hear directly from users of your product. Some examples on YouTube include AstraZeneca's Symbicort My Asthma Story ([http://www.youtube.com/myasthma\\_story](http://www.youtube.com/myasthma_story)), Sanofi-Aventis' Go Insulin (<http://www.youtube.com/goinsulin>) and Johnson & Johnson's Realize Band channel (<http://www.youtube.com/user/RealizeBand>).

One study found that 93 percent of consumers take action after watching a health video online and 60 percent of consumers will interact with a doctor after watching online health video, so considering online video as part of your 2010 plans is key.<sup>7</sup>

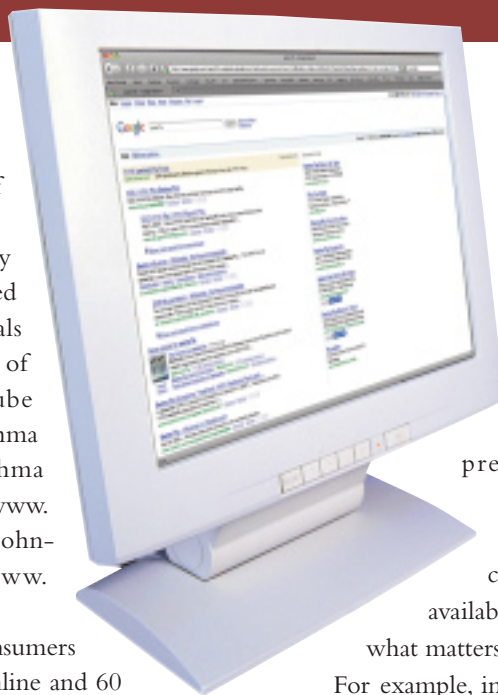
### Be social:

#### Yes, community matters

Online communities give people the opportunity to connect. Healthcare communities exist everywhere, as consumers seek connections with others who understand their conditions. According a recent Pew Internet study, consumers are often looking for tailored information that is very specific to their needs and lifestyle. Indeed, 41 percent of e-patients have read someone else's commentary or experience about health or medical issues on an online news group, Web site or blog.<sup>8</sup>

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For pharmaceutical companies, there are two important ways to engage in social communities in 2010. First, everyone can participate in active listening so you can better understand what matters to consumers in real time. Nielsen Online looked at 500 postings on Yahoo Health boards and only one post contained enough information to qualify as an adverse event that needed to be reported.<sup>9</sup> Your companies already have a process in place to report these events, so don't be afraid to listen. Second, find a way to be a part of the conversation – there are controls that can help pharma. For example on a YouTube brand channel, you can review all posted comments before



they go live on the site or even turn comments off.

### Be insightful: Data beats opinion

Most consumers take action based on what they've learned within a month of beginning to look for information. Many follow up with a doctor and many start or change a prescription after conducting online research.<sup>4</sup> Digital media offers a unique opportunity to gain insights from your customers. There are many free tools available that can help you better understand what matters to consumers in real-time.

For example, in a 90-day period ending this past summer, the term "sotomayor diabetes" is a breakout Google search query in the United States. Knowing trends like this can help you understand when there are spikes in interest for your products. With Google Insights for Search, you have the ability look at trends with queries relevant to your brand and condition. You also have the ability to compare search volume trends across multiple search terms, industries, geographic regions or specific time ranges.

### Four 2010 strategies for pharma

In 2010, pharmaceutical companies need to focus on communicating with the empowered patient online. Ensure you are reaching consumers at the moment of relevance. Help consumers get to know your products from trusted authentic sources. Become part of the community – listen and participate. Finally, glean insights from data to better help you understand what matters most. **DTC**

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#### FOOTNOTES

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