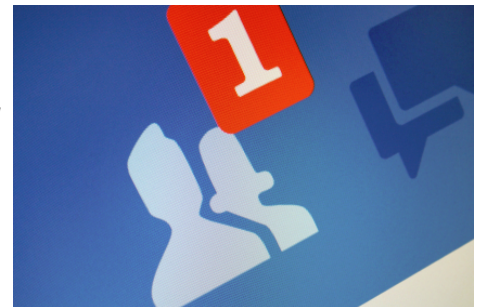


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Only 16% of hospitals actively use social media

November 26, 2012 | By Karen Cheung-Larivee

"A hospital without an engaging social media presence soon may be viewed with the same suspicion as a business that has no website," according to the Healthcare Association of New York State, the *Times Union* [reported](#). According to a [white paper](#) from the association, 81 percent of consumers say if a hospital has a strong social media presence, it is likely to be more cutting edge.



The association white paper falls in line with other [research](#) from Pew Research Center, which in July found that about 60 percent of adults use the Internet to make healthcare decisions.

Even more, PwC in April [found](#) that more than two-fifths of [individuals said social media affected their choice of a provider](#) or healthcare organization.

Despite those numbers, many hospitals are still behind on the social media trend. Only 16 percent of hospitals are actively using social media, according to the *Times Union*.

"From a business perspective, (hospitals) are missing a great opportunity to find people who would like to use them when they need them," Andrea J. Simon, an anthropologist and founder of Simon Associates Management Consultants based in Westchester County, told the newspaper.

Most of the hesitation surrounding social media involves possible negative reviews that might hurt their reputation.

"It's losing control, especially in administration, where we want to control our message," said Darlene Olivieri Raynsford, director of communications for Glens Falls Hospital, whose policy is to reach out to the negative commenter and talk to him or her offline.

In another example of how to handle negative comments, when a patient at the Thomas Jefferson University Hospitals' Headache Center [complained on Twitter about a long wait](#), Jefferson Director of Social Media Josh Goldstein immediately texted the interactive marketing team to go the waiting room and find the patient. It turned out the patient had never signed in at the computer kiosk, and the matter was resolved in a matter of minutes.

But hospitals shouldn't be as concerned about patients on social media as their own employees, according to Kim Fox, a vice president at healthcare marketing firm Jarrard Phillips Cate & Hancock based in Nashville, Tenn.

"We spend a lot of time worrying about what our customers might say on social media, but our employees' comments can be far more damaging," Fox said in a blog [post](#) last month about employees who might use Facebook or Twitter to complain publicly.

Fox suggests giving them another outlet such as an employee hotline or the [CEO's email address](#).

For more information:

- read the *Times Union* [article](#)
- see the HANY white [paper](#) (.pdf)
- here's the PwC [research](#)
- read the Jarrard blog [post](#)

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