
Influencing the path to care with responsible advertising

How context, curation, and trust drive practice behavioral changes among physicians



It's time to adapt your content strategy to physicians' evolving needs

Physicians are increasingly careful about the online content they consume. This is partly due to the spread of online misinformation and physicians' growing distrust of online advertising tactics. Advertisements are "helpful in some ways but require a bit of caution and diligence to follow," as one physician described in a recent survey by Wolters Kluwer. They are "useful only if presenting ... data-backed outcomes," said another.

To create a successful online content experience for physicians, marketers should focus on building trust through their messaging and aligning their promotions with highly frequented, user-friendly content. They must be certain they are aligning

themselves with websites that are trusted, valuable to physicians' practices, and worthwhile in terms of the experiences they provide. Building a deeper understanding of physicians' content consumption habits and their evolving perceptions of online publications and resources can help.

This white paper identifies key aspects of a successful online content experience for physicians today—aspects that advertisers should prioritize when selecting and preparing promotions for online channels. Throughout this white paper, we support these best practices with insights from Wolters Kluwer's recent survey of physicians' evolving content consumption habits.

About our sources

This white paper features data from an online survey of physicians developed and managed by Wolters Kluwer. Fieldwork took place from late 2021 to early 2022 and received 1,013 qualified survey responses. This white paper also features insights from Wolters Kluwer's September 2022 thought leadership webinar, *How physicians' new content preferences impact specialty-targeted advertising*.



"Marketers need to elevate their content to represent meaningful ways that drive practice behavior changes. That content needs to be rooted in research data and clinical trial results."

Heidi Alexander, Vice President of Global Marketing Services at Wolters Kluwer

Adapting specialty advertising to new physician expectations

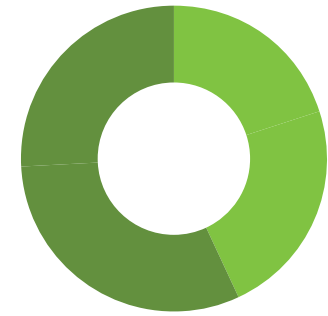
Following professional uncertainty during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, physicians are tuning in to trusted professional resources for insights that drive progress within their practices. Between 2021 and 2022, 43.4% of physicians cited an increase in the overall influence of their preferred journals' society affiliation on their clinical practices.

Physicians prioritize different types and formats of content for different purposes. For example, podcasts are becoming more popular among some physicians as a way to stay up-to-date on trends and industry developments. "Audio overshadows video as the new content type for clinical content, despite the fact that only a few years ago there weren't clinically focused podcasts at all," according to one webinar participant.

Still, keeping up to date on recent trends and accessing evidence-based information that can drive real changes in a physician's practice are very different behaviors. The value each type of content provides must align with the needs of physicians and their purpose in accessing that content.

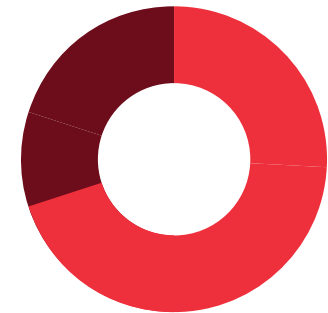
For example, peer-reviewed online journals remain one of the most impactful resources in terms of how they affect physicians' practices. "Practitioners overwhelmingly perceive peer-reviewed content as the most credible because there is an 'extra layer' of validation that the content is medically accurate," according to one webinar participant. They are the most trusted among over a dozen other types of professional resources for keeping physicians up to date: 65.9% of physicians claim this to be the case.

Meanwhile, 19.9% of physicians make the same claim about special medical websites (i.e., medical society websites). Medical society websites are especially helpful in sharing evidence-based information and clinical guidelines, which also can drive meaningful changes in physicians' practices. Both of these formats require a great deal of trust among physicians, but physicians also expect exceptional efforts from publishers and advertisers in terms of content curation, value, and discoverability, among others.



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Adapting specialty advertising to new physician expectations

Content in journals and medical society websites has evolved

To adapt their content experiences to meet physicians' needs, online journal publishers and medical society websites have adopted several different methods. In advanced cases, journal publishers are using algorithmic content curation tools and AI-powered interfaces to surface the most relevant articles for physicians based on their individual browsing behavior.

Medical society websites have also expanded the content available to include videos, infographics, and podcasts. These formats are becoming increasingly popular among physicians because they provide an engaging and more personalized way to learn.

Positive implications for advertisers

Publishers are also increasingly adapting their approach to the positioning and curation of promotional content. This is in direct recognition and response to changes in how physicians perceive, interpret, and trust advertisements within professional online publications. For example, 16.4% of physicians believe the placement of industry sponsorships on society websites increases those advertisements' credibility (i.e., based on the context of the publication alone).

Now, publishers are becoming more flexible and practical in how they position legitimate ads within their online publications. For example, societies are loosening up where ads sit within their websites. In some cases, advertisers now can have creative content placed adjacent to articles based on conditions (e.g., visitors' search criteria), the relevance of adjacent articles, and the personal information of users (e.g., a user's field).



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Aligning ads with content that performs

Clearly, context is increasingly important for advertisers. Although general medical websites have useful general science, medical news, and quick references, advertisers may wish to align their promotions with curated professional content designed to help physicians provide better patient outcomes. After all, this is the goal for any advertiser: to impact change in physicians' decision-making and behavior in a way that improves their practice.

Fortunately, most physicians (50.5%) already believe industry-sponsored messages (i.e. advertisements)

offer some value—as one physician describes, they are “opportunities to inform me about potential new treatments or products that I may be interested in trying,” whether or not they adopt them in the end.

Advertisers can take advantage of publishers' new practices to drive these meaningful results. On the next page, we will consider [two key insights](#) from our recent survey. Overall, advertisers should prioritize discoverability, building trust with physicians, and ensuring that their promotions align with physicians' trusted sources.

“Influencing the path to care is one of the most important things for advertisers in terms of HCPs acting on their messages. But advertisers need to build evidence-based information into their messaging for someone to change practice behavior.”

Heidi Alexander, Vice President of Global Marketing Services at Wolters Kluwer

Aligning ads with content that performs

Curation is key

The most common challenge physicians face when reading journal content is that they do not have enough time to read everything they want—80.4% of physicians in the survey claimed this to be the case. Physicians want a level of curation so that they can consume key insights from research and clinical trials rather than dig deep into massive amounts of content.

As indicated, peer-reviewed online journals and online society websites feature heavily vetted and curated content that drives physicians' trust. Advertisers who can align themselves with these sources— and then add value to physicians' experiences accessing them—will be best positioned for success. As one webinar participant describes, "Online medical journal sites are where physicians act the most after seeing the ads."



Valuable content is gated

Sites with gated content suggest those publishers have invested in those resources. Gated content, therefore, represents a strategic element of curated content, where physicians must share personal data or register for an online account to access exclusive insights. While this applies to downloadable content via logins and forms, gated websites—such as society journal websites—can also serve as more meaningful gateways to a wider range of valuable content and potent advertising opportunities.

Survey results demonstrate that physicians who visit an online journal website—a gated environment—are more likely to visit a sponsor's website (21.5%) when engaging with a promotion compared to three other actions. Physicians are also more likely to take this action in this gated environment than in either aggregator sites, free sites, or medical social sites.

Although gated content may have a limited audience compared to publicly available content, physicians who access it already have demonstrated a willingness to take action and even share their personal information. They are effectively one step closer to engaging with an advertisement than physicians accessing publicly available content.

Wolters Kluwer has witnessed this behavior firsthand within its own gated environments: [Ovid®](#)—a gated environment for practitioners that provides clinical, evidence-based research and content for every department, and [UpToDate®](#), a resource for clinical decision support. Each provides highly valuable content only to practitioners and other professionals who subscribe to its resources.

Choosing environments that support meaningful action

Valuable content and gated environments don't perform unless physicians' experiences with navigation, comprehension, and discovery within those environments are worthwhile. Specifically, physicians need to rapidly search for and then discover the information they need; this especially applies to highly specific content that can be difficult to find without advanced search features. Here is a closer look at elements advertisers can seek out when choosing environments in which to advertise.



Prioritize discoverability

Advertisers should prioritize online channels with a purpose-built user experience (UX) that increases the personalization and discoverability of key content in meaningful ways. Autocomplete, search filters, and other search features can be particularly helpful in this respect because physicians often find themselves searching for a specific term or concept using sophisticated language.

But healthcare resources require more advanced search features than websites designed for the general public, especially as research increasingly spans disciplines and new areas of discourse emerge. For example, Lippincott® provides a new capability called “Collections” that uses an algorithm to find intersectionality between conditions (e.g. DEI) and then shares all the peer-reviewed articles that discuss those conditions (e.g. inequity and disparities).



Participate in trust

Trust is critical in physicians' decision-making and perceptions of the quality of online content. Advertisers can take part in this by aligning themselves with publishers that physicians already find trustworthy, whether through advertising or other means.

For example, physicians know that medical societies have approved not just the content on their sites but also the advertisements on their sites. Ads have gone through more robust vetting than public websites. Findings from the survey show that when physicians see ads adjacent to the content from society journals, they are more likely to trust the science that's backing the claims within those ads.

By aligning themselves with physicians' trusted sources, advertisers can help physicians feel more confident about their online experiences and the promotions they see. This trust can translate into better engagement with promotions and more effective advertising outcomes in the long run.

“No matter the environment, vetting and credibility are key. On platforms like Lippincott, versus general medical websites and social media, physicians are more likely to act because advertisements have been vetted to be appropriate in an academic journal space.”

Heidi Alexander, Vice President of Global Marketing Services at Wolters Kluwer



“When you lean into educational messaging—where you actually teach physicians something beyond your product benefits—that will help them change how they practice medicine and really treat their patients better, that is where you are going to have the highest engagement and impact.”

Heidi Alexander, Vice President of Global Marketing Services at Wolters Kluwer

Building Future Success in Targeted Advertising

Above all, advertisers should treat their ads as educational resources because this will be the context in which those advertisements appear. Advertisements are “useful only if presenting a statement about treatment technique and data-backed outcomes rather than purely promotion of a specific product,” as one physician described in our survey.

By incorporating these key elements into their online advertising strategies, advertisers can better engage physicians and ultimately achieve more successful marketing outcomes. Moving forward, they can build truly successful relationships between physicians and their brands.

Partner With Lippincott® HCP Access at Wolters Kluwer

Our solution experts at Lippincott® HCP Access ensure your brand delivers the right message, in the right format, at the right time.

Whether you're looking to achieve growth targets, expand to new market segments, or engage healthcare professionals in innovative or integrated ways, we have the most effective channels to help you succeed in your marketing, recruitment, or clinical content goals.

Our specialists can help you:

- Choose the right program to attract your target healthcare decision-makers and influencers.
- Discover how you can take your campaign to the next level with our targeted audience solutions.
- Find content to match and enhance your campaign needs.
- Identify innovative approaches to generate leads, engagement, brand awareness, and more!

Contact an [expert](#) when you're ready for personalized advice on a successful content strategy.

