



**HCP Influencers: 5 Ways to Analyze  
Digital Opinion Leaders**

# THE PANDEMIC ACCELERATED THE NUMBER AND REACH OF HCP INFLUENCERS.

The urgent scramble for Covid-19 clinical and treatment information pushed the envelope on healthcare providers offering ideas, insights, opinions, and case studies in almost every social media channel. You will be surprised at the number of HCP influencers and the size and scale of their followers on platforms from Facebook and Twitter to TikTok and Instagram.

**Follow LiveWorld's 5As formula to assess  
and access this powerful emerging social channel.**

Digital Opinion Leaders (DOLs) are perceived as practitioners in contrast to traditional Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs), who can be pegged as academics and spokespeople for pharma brands. They create organic peer-to-peer conversations, share scientific data and points of view, inject practical voices into competitive markets and hold out the possibility for pharma brands to borrow their brand equity and access their attentive audiences.

Most influencers carefully construct and curate their brands. Many have built a following by sharing resonant, relevant, timely and personal information. They build trust among followers by being authentic, transparent, and collaborative. Beyond ego, they see their role as educators, interpreters, commentators, and evaluators of medical and scientific developments.

Understanding the reach and influence of DOLs, who are frequently doctors, nurses, and nurse

practitioners (NPs) and/or physician assistants (PAs), and learning how to engage with them is an evolving marketing strategy that will continue to impact the success of pharma marketing campaigns.

And while there is some overlap between emerging DOLs and traditional KOLs, digital actors, who are generally self-appointed, have large and growing followings, are highly interactive with followers, post frequently, focus on their medical specialties and are particularly active around medical meetings and congresses. DOLs tend to raise awareness about conditions, symptoms, new treatments or products, clinical trial data or on-going research, advocacy group positions and healthcare policy. The challenge for savvy marketers is to identify, filter, vet, and engage with appropriate DOLs to support product launches, present new indications, or counter competitive moves or misinformation.

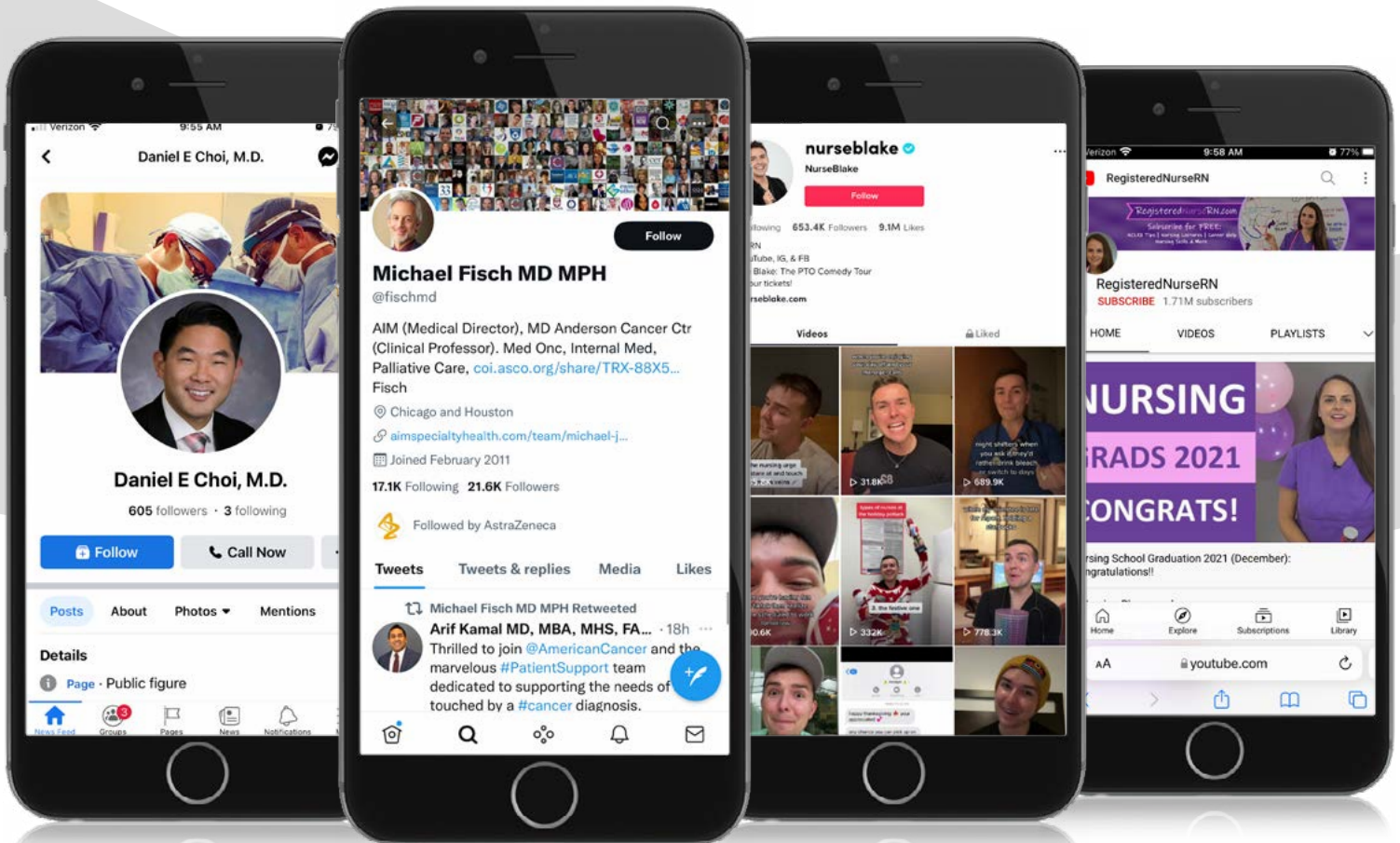


# HERE ARE 5 WAYS TO ANALYZE THE DOL UNIVERSE FOR YOUR BRAND

**1 Audience.** There are two dimensions to gauging the followers of a DOL. First is the sheer number of followers, which does not necessarily equate to reach or persuasion but signals general appeal. The number of followers can be artificially inflated by bots, click farms and purchased followers which have no present value to brands. Most DOLs don't conform to classic media measurements. Analytics are a mixed bag. Many don't track in-bound traffic, count repeat visits, capture CRM data or attribute traffic to promotional or search sources. A big following may or may not be regular readers or interactors. Study the posts to gauge frequency and count likes,

shares or the number and quality of comments to factor persuasiveness and the likelihood of measuring the value of an affiliation.

A second dimension of the audience variable is the target population. Who are they talking to and from what posture? Some DOLs, like [Dr. Dan Choi](#), focus strictly on surgery for 17,000 fellow physicians, nurses, PAs, on Instagram. Similarly, [Dr. Michael Fisch](#) focuses on oncology in addressing 20,560 Twitter followers. [Nurse Blake](#), with 562,000 TikTok followers, covers the humorous side of nursing. While [Nurse Sarah](#), with 1.4 million YouTube followers, focuses on practical how-to tips and tricks for nurses.



**Dr. Shalaan Beg** curates research studies, clinical trial results, congress presentations and journal articles for 5300 followers on Twitter. So does Harvard professor, author, and endocrinologist **Dr. David Ludwig** for his 34,000 Facebook and 31,000 Twitter followers.

Others, like **Kevin MD**, take a general storytelling approach to conditions, symptoms, research, and treatments addressing the professional medical community of 125,000 followers on Facebook and 161,000 on Twitter. Dr. Kimberly Manning (aka “**Gradydoctor**”) position themselves as professional interpreters of specific diseases or broader medical and wellness issues for patients and caregivers for 72,000 followers on Twitter.



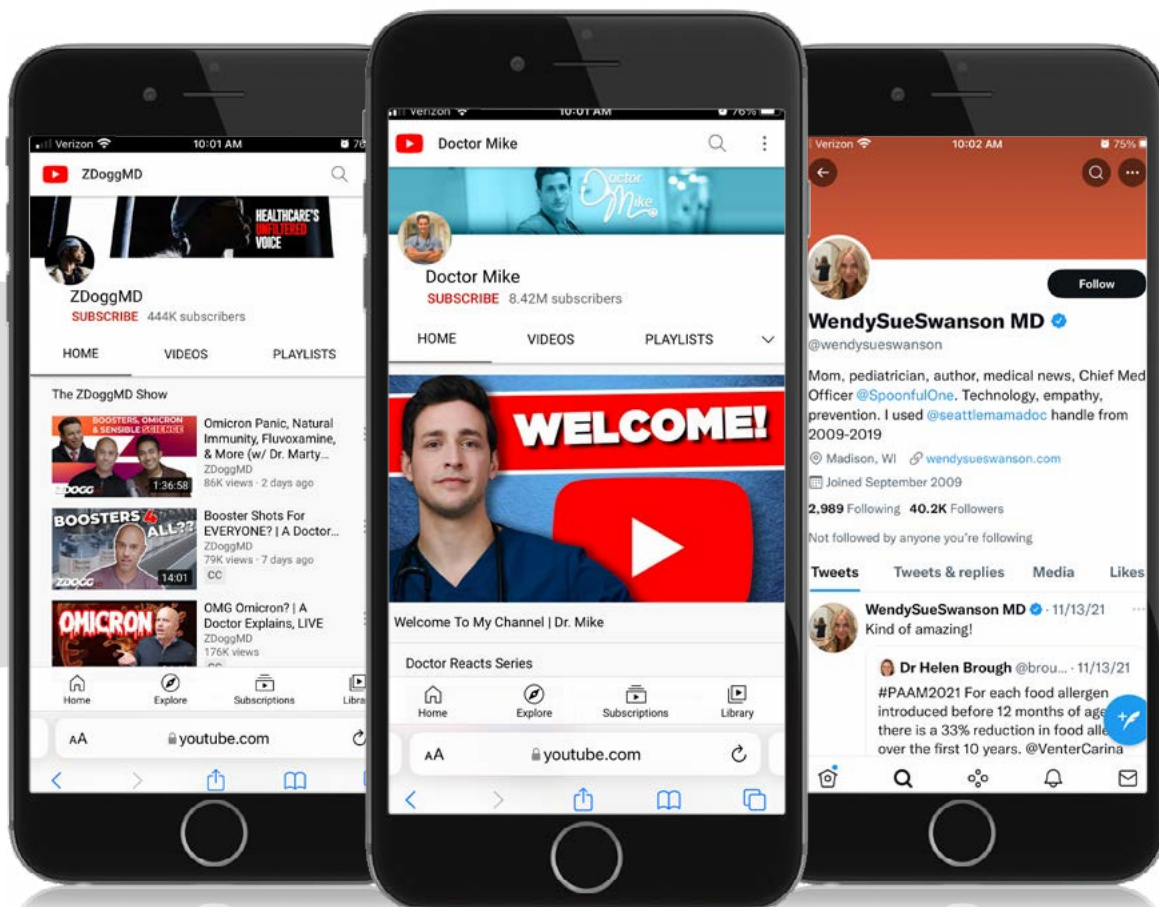
**ZdoggMD**, with 2.3 million Facebook followers and 60 million YouTube views in 2020, is the equivalent of an Op-Ed columnist producing bold opinions and often adversarial points of view on clinical, business, policy, and treatment issues.

**2 Attitude & Altitude.** Consider the tone, manner, and language of DOL content. Some strike a neutral professional tone. **Dr. Mike**, with 16 million followers on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube, takes a warm and friendly posture. Look carefully at how ideas and cases are framed and presented. Is the language highly scientific and medical in nature and is aimed at highly trained professionals? Are complex science terms or concepts expressed in layman’s terms to help patients and caregivers understand how drugs, procedures or mechanisms of action

work? Is content structured for interaction and conversation or simply presented to be read or downloaded?

**3 Affiliation & Area.** Are the DOLs you are considering affiliated with academic institutions, pharmaceutical companies, hospital systems or advocacy organizations? Are affiliations disclosed? Are authors independent? Do their opinions reflect a growing professional consensus or a political point of view? Are ideas and opinions original or unique?

Like **Dr. Wendy Sue Swanson** (“Seattle Mama Doc”) do they represent a geographic or psychodemographic segment of the professional or patient population? Do they focus on specific geographies or institutions with certain parameters? It’s critical to understand the perspective and the voice that could be potentially associated with your firm or your brand.

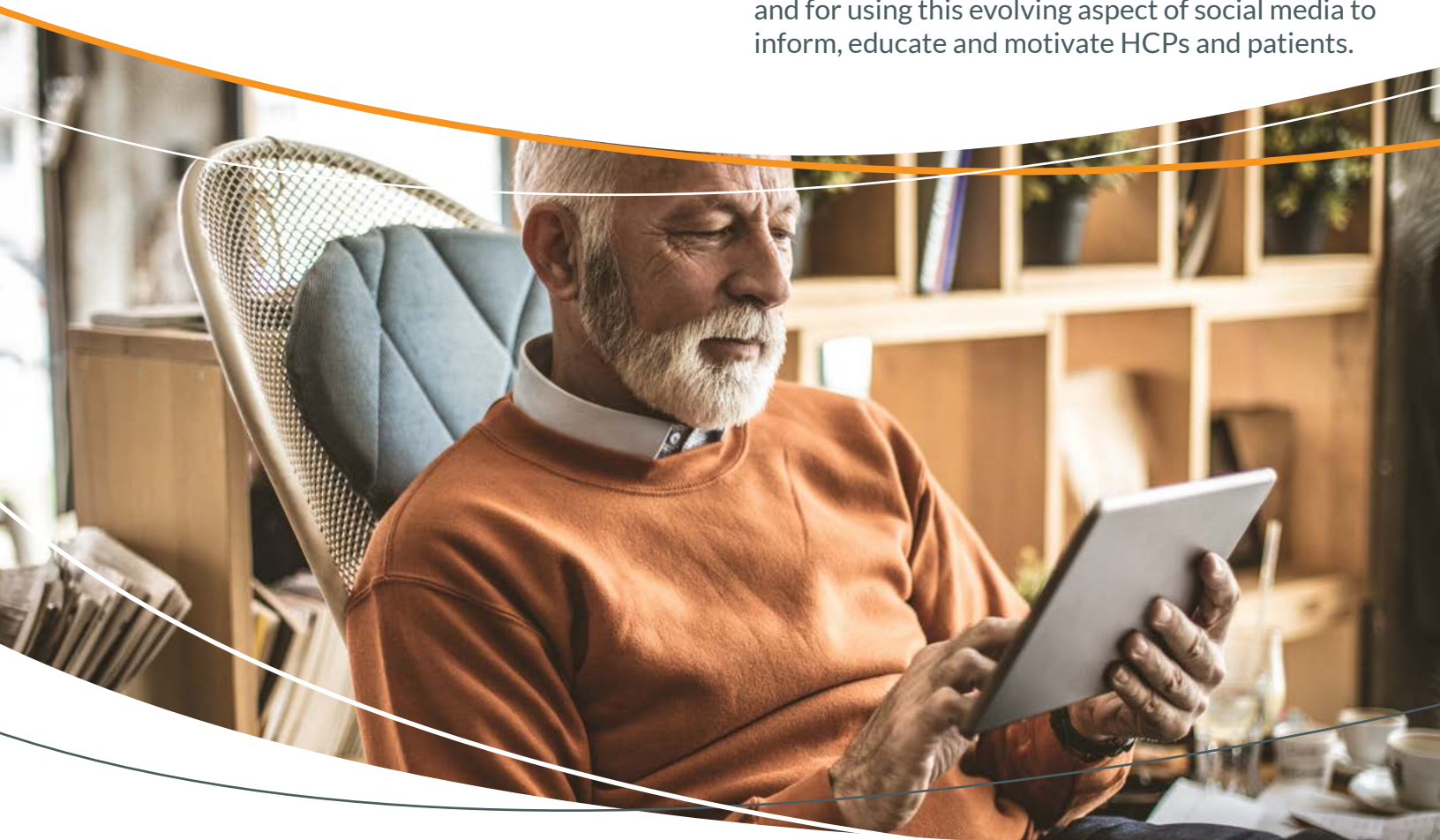


**4 Access.** Some DOLs are open to editorial input, cooperative research, interviews with clinical investigators, or conversations with policy makers. Some are not. Some welcome collaboration with pharma, others don't. Several offer advertising opportunities. Many do not. No one wants to be perceived as a shill for pharma. Approaching DOLs requires studying their positioning and content, assessing their audience composition, forecasting engagement and respecting their positions and opinions.

**5 Activate.** Adding DOLs to your marketing plan requires careful planning, serious research, attention to detail and sensitive relationship building. Begin by investigating DOLs in your therapeutic area. Rank them on reach, relevance, resonance, engagement, and risk. Identify any overlaps or synergies with KOLs. Look for

supportive opinions or perspectives and calculate likely engagement. Craft individual messaging for DOLs and determine whether to integrate different messages among DOLs or have all DOLs communicate the same ideas in roadblock fashion. Create a coordinated calendar and synchronize influencer activity with other promotional and marketing elements. Reach out, educate, rehearse, respond, and launch your program. Then measure reactions and results.

The role, the reach and the influence of digital opinion leaders is growing and evolving across the social networks. For example, a quick Twitter search turns up 20 oncology DOLs with followers ranging from 1,900 to 20,000. Fueled by evidence-based content presented by well-meaning and well-qualified practitioners, HCP social influencers are gaining a regular place in brand marketing plans. It's critical for pharma brands to recognize the potential for aligning with appropriate influencers and for using this evolving aspect of social media to inform, educate and motivate HCPs and patients.



# ABOUT LIVEWORLD

**LiveWorld is a digital agency and software company specializing in social media solutions that help companies build stronger customer relationships.** We provide consulting, strategy, and creative along with human agents, conversation management software, and chatbots for digital campaigns and social media programs.

Our solutions empower companies to deepen relationships with customers, professionals, patients and healthcare providers with emotion driven behavior change through conversations and campaigns with a human touch.



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