



Inside HCP Walled Gardens

DOCTORS' SAFE HAVEN

Virtually all US physicians and a sizeable chunk of global HCPs are members of one of the secure, HCP-only social networks. Whether they are there to consume, create, or share information, these are resources they turn to again and again for professional collaboration, unfiltered discussions, and specific influencer content. A recent survey of HCP social media users revealed that **89% find social media to be an effective professional communications channel**, as well as a trusted source for learning about new treatments, treatment data, and disease education.¹

And their use is only going to grow: The combined trends of Covid-19 and the proportion of younger HCPs in the workforce have made **HCP social media one of the hottest growth areas for physician communication**. Sermo, Doximity, and Skipta have all reported massive spikes in subscriptions, visits, time spent on site, and even the energy of HCP discussions.^{2,3}

This is all good news for brands, who have opportunities to reach and form relationships with highly targeted HCPs even in these walled gardens. While every platform has its own rules and regulations, **savvy marketers can be assured that thoughtful communications, from online lectures, to sponsoring virtual events, to providing timely scientific updates will be welcomed**. These sites are also invaluable for research; you won't find a better way to conduct social listening among the people who actively use and recommend your treatments (or your competitors').

That said, HCPs don't join walled gardens to see brand ads, so it's critical to tread lightly.⁴ Unlike on the public sites, brands can't simply buy ads on the platform; **interactions are curated, vetted, and approved by each platform individually**.⁵ Let's take a look at the four major players to help you start thinking about your strategy.

1. Skipta_Quarterly_HCP_Survey_Report

2. <https://mergeworld.com/news/merge-insights/how-to-target-hcps-in-social?returnUrl=https%3A%2F%2Fmergeworld.com%2Fnews%3Fpage%3D2>

3. <https://www.pharmalive.com/how-npp-is-changing-with-the-onset-of-covid-19/>

4. <https://mergeworld.com/news/merge-insights/how-to-target-hcps-in-social?returnUrl=https%3A%2F%2Fmergeworld.com%2Fnews%3Fpage%3D2>

5. <https://mergeworld.com/news/merge-insights/how-to-target-hcps-in-social?returnUrl=https%3A%2F%2Fmergeworld.com%2Fnews%3Fpage%3D2>



SERMO: THE GLOBAL MEDICAL CROWDSOURCING PLATFORM

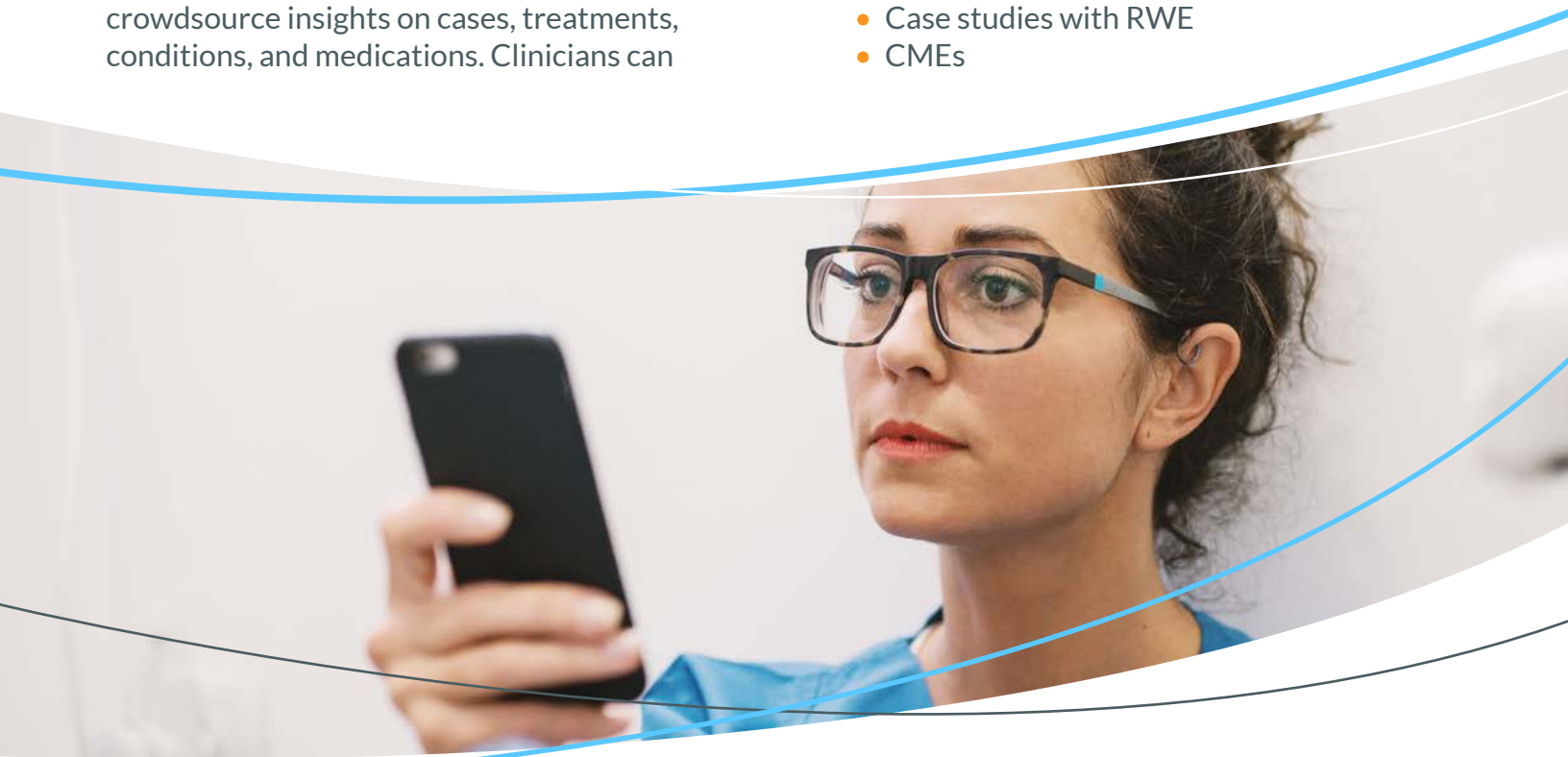
Just a year after Facebook launched, Sermo began as a way for doctors to safely report adverse events to their peers. Now a global platform for M.D.s and D.O.s representing almost seventy specialties in 150 countries, **Sermo hosts 800,000 HCPs for member-created secure discussions.**^{6,7,8} The only HCP social platform that allows members to remain anonymous, Sermo is even more likely to be the place where HCPs express their most honest, unfiltered opinions.⁹

Sermo is the dominant social engagement platform for HCPs. Like a Facebook for physicians, Sermo feeds, curated by specialty, crowdsource insights on cases, treatments, conditions, and medications. Clinicians can

rate drugs, participate in polls and surveys, seek peer advice, share cases, and converse with each other. This is the platform to understand physician attitudes, behaviors, and trends.

Members log into Sermo 5-6 times per week,¹⁰ engaging with an average 10+ posts, including pharma-generated content.¹¹ And HCPs value the content they see: 93% of members report routinely learning new things that benefit their practice.¹² The top five topics physicians look for on Sermo include:^{13,14}

- Updates from medical congresses
- Results of clinical trials
- Peer reviews of medical treatments
- Case studies with RWE
- CMEs



6. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sermo>

7. <https://www.sermo.com/about/>

8. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4103576/>

9. <https://www.sermo.com/doctors-use-social-media/>

10. <https://www.fiercepharma.com/marketing/yelp-for-drug-reviews-doc-only-social-media-sermo-nears-one-million-ratings>

11. <https://www.fiercepharma.com/marketing/yelp-for-drug-reviews-doc-only-social-media-sermo-nears-one-million-ratings>

12. http://s.sermo.com/rs/239-PZX-356/images/Sermo_The_Digital_Day_of_an_HCP_2019.pdf?utm_campaign=klickhealth&utm_medium=klick_wire&utm_source=klickhealth&utm_content=kwire_hcpday_20190520

13. http://s.sermo.com/rs/239-PZX-356/images/Sermo_The_Digital_Day_of_an_HCP_2019.pdf?utm_campaign=klickhealth&utm_medium=klick_wire&utm_source=klickhealth&utm_content=kwire_hcpday_20190520

14. Source: Internet Trends 2019, <https://www.vox.com/recode/2019/6/11/18651010/mary-meeker-internet-trends-report-slides-2019>

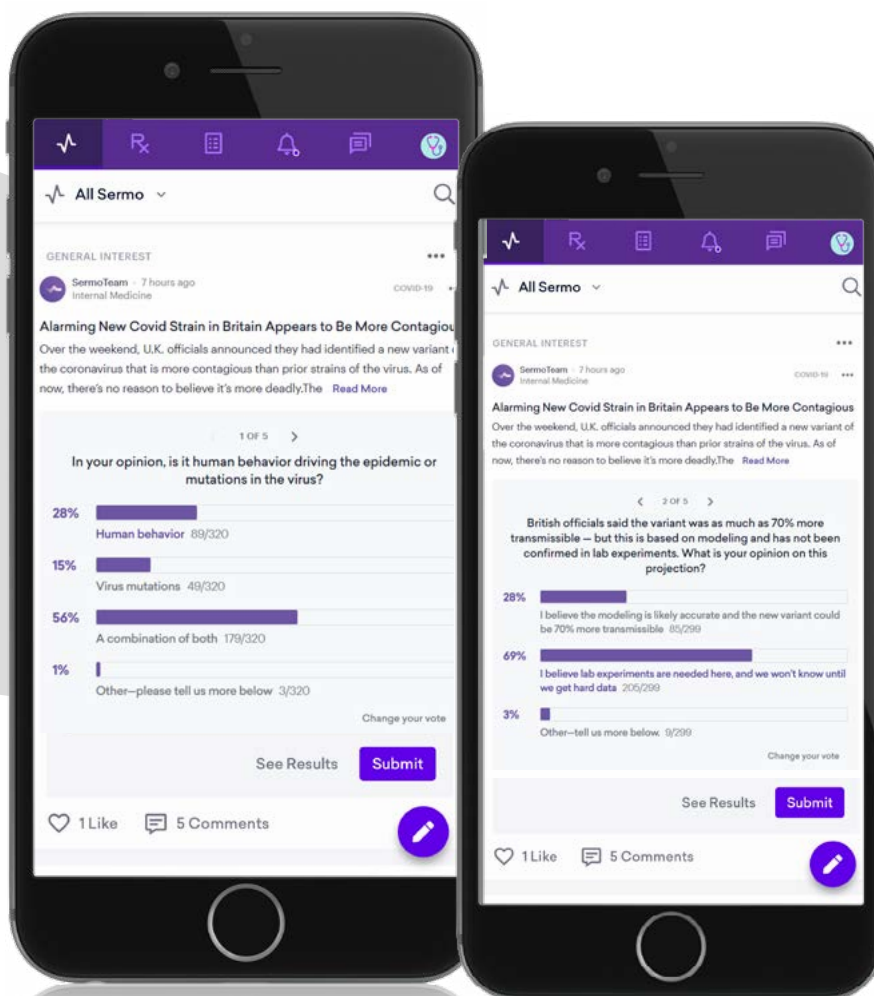


HOW SERMO MOTIVATES HCP ENGAGEMENT

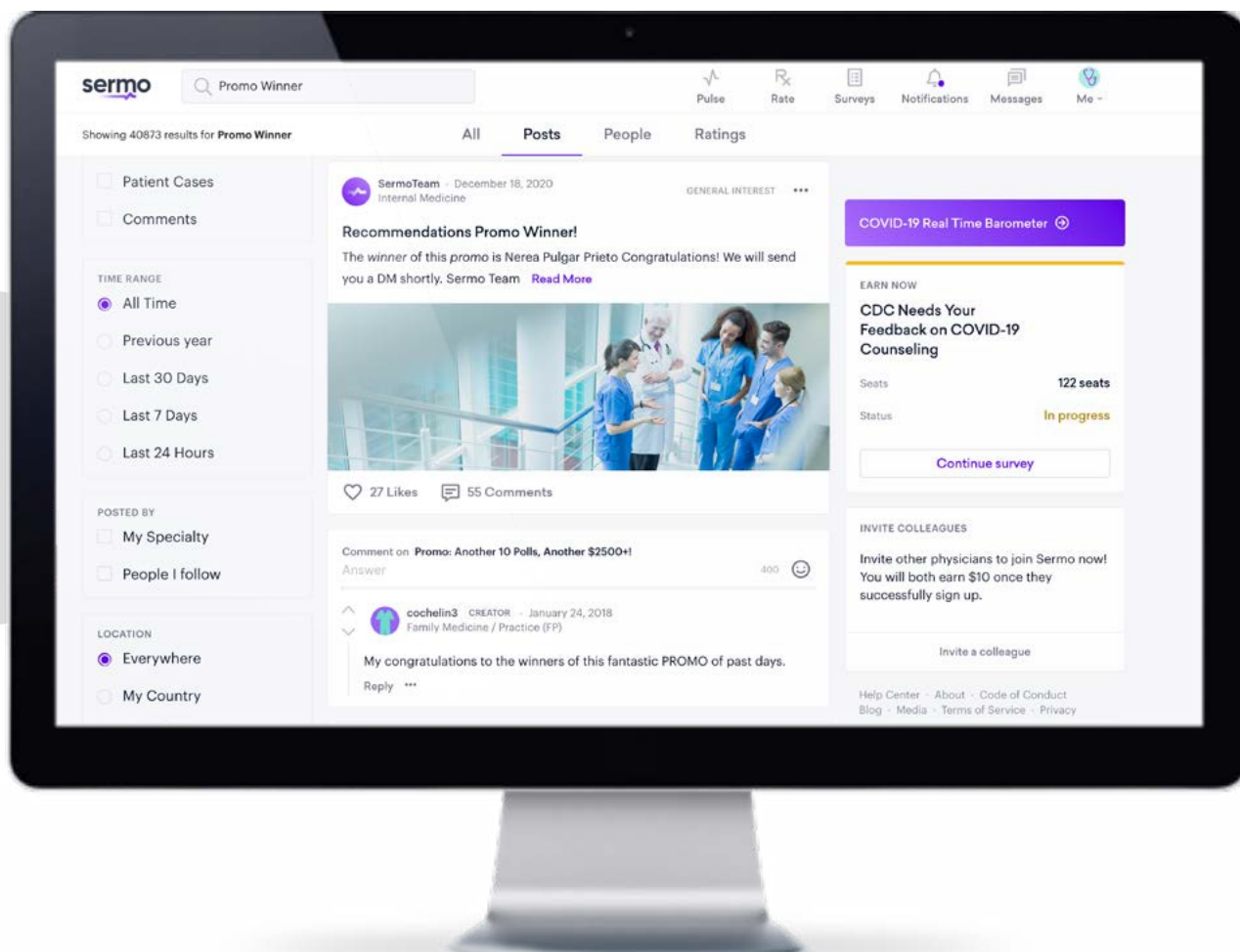
One of the most popular features on Sermo, and one of the most useful for marketers, is its **doctor-submitted drug rating system**, with almost a million unique ratings in virtually every treatment category.¹⁵ Oncology brands, take note: Ratings for cancer treatments are one of the most visited categories, with treatments for specific diseases such as breast cancer and multiple myeloma generating thousands of reviews. According to Sermo, 74% of their members plan to use the ratings again when doing research for treatments, and 50% changed their opinions about a drug after reading the ratings.¹⁶

Sermo is also a great way for HCPs to share opinions and to see where their perspectives align with their colleagues across the globe.

Sermo polls HCPs on a regular basis, asking members for input across a myriad of topics. The results of these surveys and polls offer tremendous insight into what's on the minds of HCPs with regard to a particular subject matter. Brands can trigger follow-up emails based on answers to specific poll questions. These **non-compensated/non-incentivized engagements** demonstrate the potential interaction Sermo creates, as seen in these examples about Covid-19 in Britain:



15. <https://www.fiercepharma.com/marketing/yelp-for-drug-reviews-doc-only-social-media-sermo-nears-one-million-ratings>
16. <https://www.fiercepharma.com/marketing/yelp-for-drug-reviews-doc-only-social-media-sermo-nears-one-million-ratings>



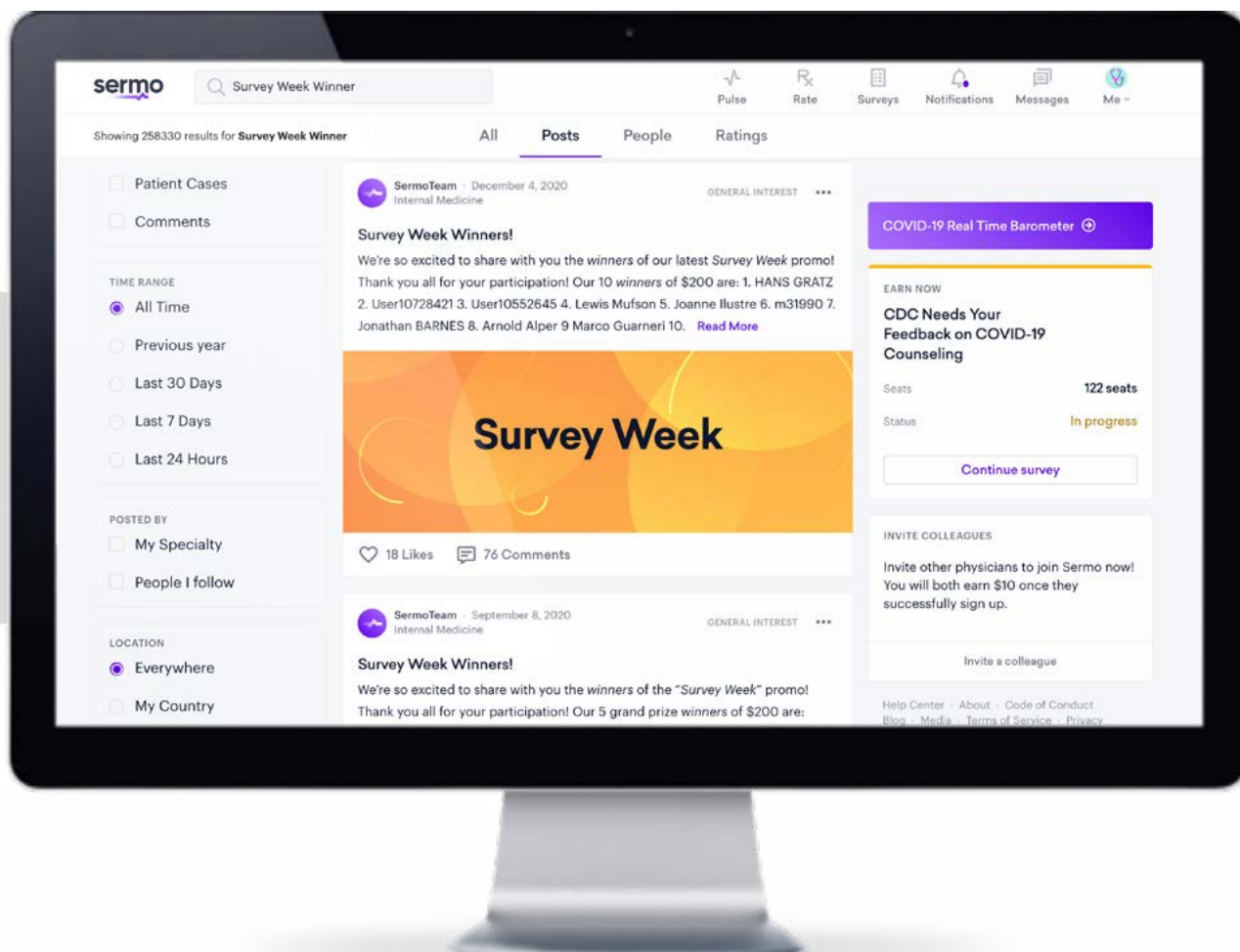
Sermo Promos is another way the site gets users talking and sharing. Promos can be co-created with sponsors to stimulate point of view, foment discussions around a particular topic, and elicit thinking around an approach.

41. <https://www.sermo.com/doctors-use-social-media/>

42. <https://www.meddatagroup.com/resource/physician-online-in-app-behaviors/>

43. <https://business.linkedin.com/marketing-solutions/blog/marketing-for-healthcare-services-/2020/measuring-healthcare-marketing-s-worth--6-steps-to-drive-growth>

44. <https://healthcaresuccess.com/blog/doctor-marketing/reasons-doctors-need-linkedin.html>



Sermo Surveys are a little different from polls, in that HCPs receive an honorarium for their time; but that means surveys can be deeper, and be run by sponsors for HCP opinions on any relevant subject, from products and treatments to shared decision making.

41. <https://www.sermo.com/doctors-use-social-media/>

42. <https://www.meddatagroup.com/resource/physician-online-in-app-behaviors/>

43. <https://business.linkedin.com/marketing-solutions/blog/marketing-for-healthcare-services-/2020/measuring-healthcare-marketing-s-worth--6-steps-to-drive-growth>

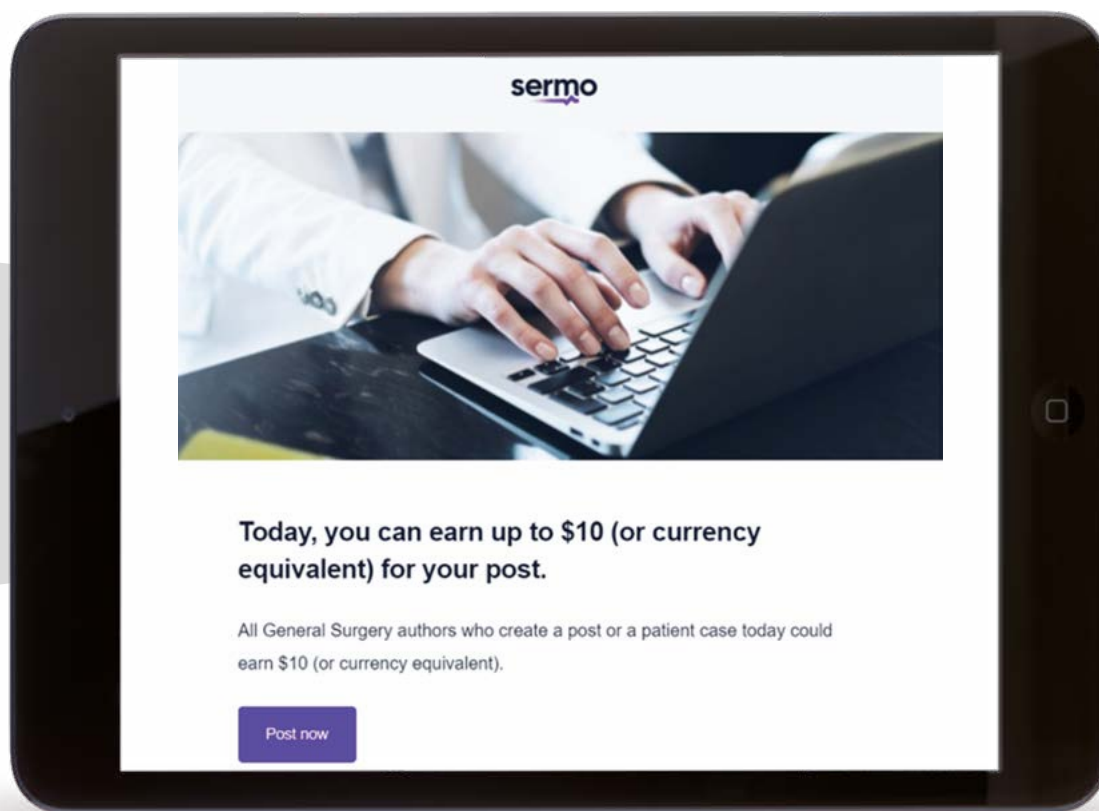
44. <https://healthcaresuccess.com/blog/doctor-marketing/reasons-doctors-need-linkedin.html>



Another incentivized activity is Sermo's **by-invitation-only opportunity for HCPs to post** opinions on topical matters; accepted posts earn HCP site credits or currency.

How brands can partner with Sermo:¹⁷

- **Brand promotion:** Sermo accepts in-feed units and sponsored posts.
- **Market research:** Sermo offers both custom surveys and subscriptions to its RealTime platform to field research to your target HCP segments around the world.¹⁸
- **Social listening:** You can evaluate HCP conversations, as well as use the drug ratings database for valuable insights about HCP experiences with your brand and your competitors.¹⁹
- **Direct engagement:** Your in-house HCPs can join conversations to (respectfully) understand what's behind current perceptions of your treatments — even your marketing and messages.²⁰
- **Sponsor or co-create** Sermo \$urvey\$, quizzes, panels, polls and more.²¹



17. Sermo

18. <https://avanthc.com/the-medium-is-the-message-the-value-of-hcp-social-media/>

19. <https://www.fiercepharma.com/marketing/sermo-drug-ratings-system-grows-to-thousands-doctor-reviews-after-just-one-year>

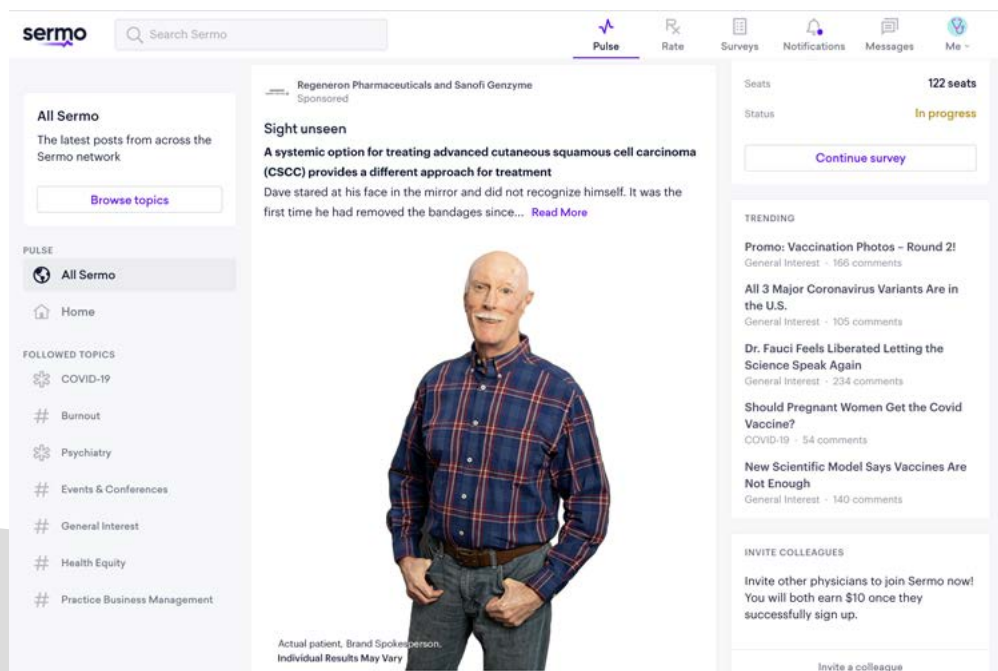
20. <https://www.fiercepharma.com/marketing/sermo-drug-ratings-system-grows-to-thousands-doctor-reviews-after-just-one-year>

21. <https://www.mmm-online.com/home/channel/media-news/sermo-and-everyday-health-partner-in-advertising-research-deal/>

BEST IN CLASS

We like Regeneron's **use of a patient narrative to generate interest in their new treatment approach** for advanced cutaneous squamous cell carcinoma.

Headspace is **proactively creating HCP influencers** for its app by offering Sermo members free subscriptions.



Sermo Search Sermo

Regeneron Pharmaceuticals and Sanofi Genzyme
Sponsored

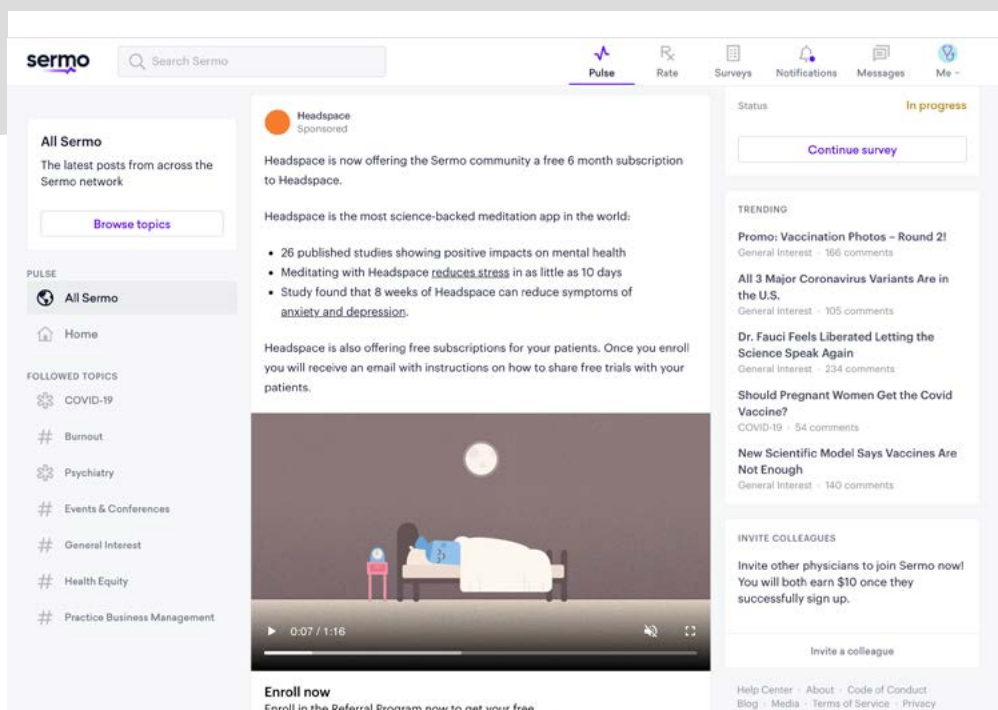
Sight unseen
A systemic option for treating advanced cutaneous squamous cell carcinoma (CSCC) provides a different approach for treatment
Dave stared at his face in the mirror and did not recognize himself. It was the first time he had removed the bandages since... [Read More](#)

Actual patient, Brand Spokesperson, Individual Results May Vary

Seats 122 seats
Status In progress
[Continue survey](#)

TRENDING
Promo: Vaccination Photos - Round 2!
General Interest - 166 comments
All 3 Major Coronavirus Variants Are in the U.S.
General Interest - 105 comments
Dr. Fauci Feels Liberated Letting the Science Speak Again
General Interest - 234 comments
Should Pregnant Women Get the Covid Vaccine?
COVID-19 - 54 comments
New Scientific Model Says Vaccines Are Not Enough
General Interest - 140 comments

INVITE COLLEAGUES
Invite other physicians to join Sermo now!
You will both earn \$10 once they successfully sign up.
[Invite a colleague](#)



Sermo Search Sermo

Headspace
Sponsored

Headspace is now offering the Sermo community a free 6 month subscription to Headspace.

Headspace is the most science-backed meditation app in the world:

- 26 published studies showing positive impacts on mental health
- Meditating with Headspace reduces stress in as little as 10 days
- Study found that 8 weeks of Headspace can reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression.

Headspace is also offering free subscriptions for your patients. Once you enroll you will receive an email with instructions on how to share free trials with your patients.

Enroll now
Enroll in the Referral Program now to get your free

Seats 122 seats
Status In progress
[Continue survey](#)

TRENDING
Promo: Vaccination Photos - Round 2!
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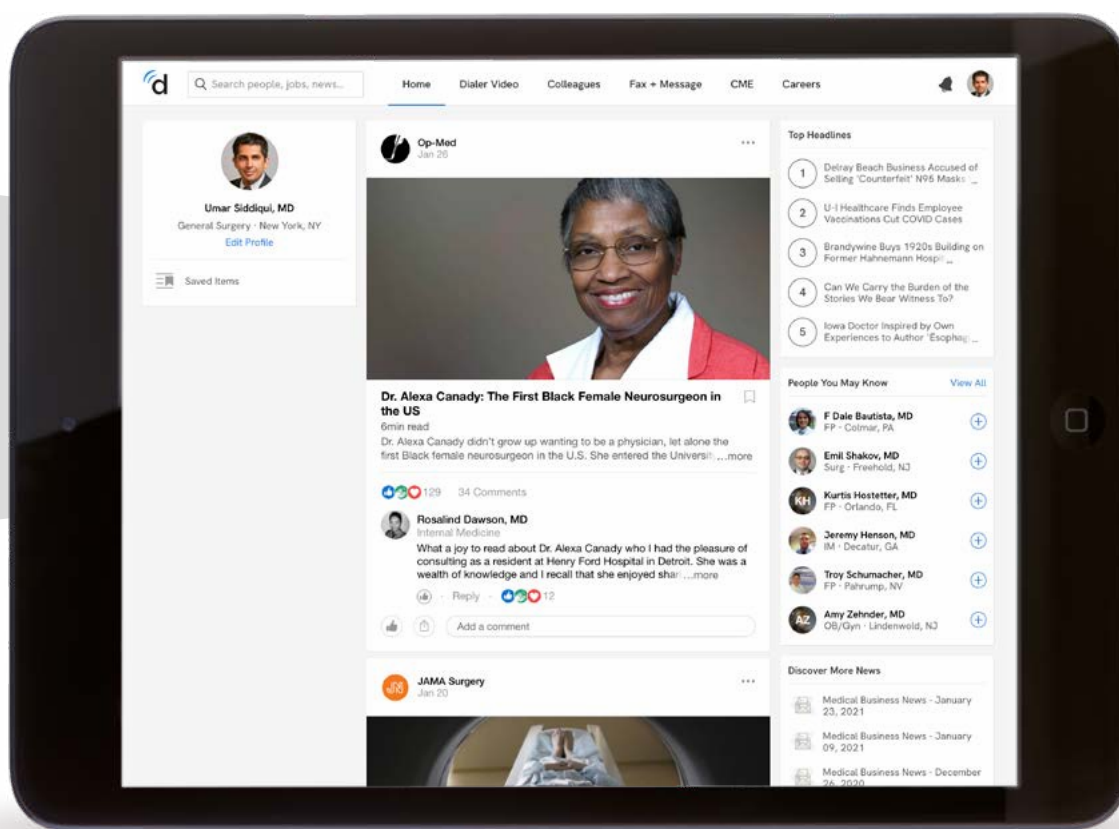
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Blog · Media · Terms of Service · Privacy

DOXIMITY: THE LARGEST US HCP NETWORK

With over a million members, **Doximity is the largest professional medical network in the United States**, including three-quarters of all US physicians, 90% of fourth-year medical students, and 45% of all nurse practitioners and physicians' assistants.²² Even those physicians who aren't registered members can be reached via Doximity's national database of demographic and contact information for all U.S. physicians.^{23,24,25}

Doximity was created to increase efficiency for healthcare providers in helping patients;²⁶ its app-based workflow tools are an important part of how HCPs communicate with colleagues and patients. Use of their telehealth platform, Doximity Dialer and Doximity Dialer Video, has exploded since Covid-19, going from a million calls a month to a million calls *per day*.²⁷

Doximity is also the leading professional job board. With very few clinical conversations and limited sharing, medical content comes from well-established sources like academic centers, clinical associations, journals, and medical associations. Content is curated by medical specialty, but with little or no means for interaction and insights.



22. <http://messageabmedia.com/marketing-on-doximity-what-you-need-to-know/>

23. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4103576/>

24. <https://www.healthtechzone.com/topics/healthcare/articles/2020/06/02/445587-doximity-dialer-video-bridging-telemedicine-divide.htm>

25. <https://www.healthtechzone.com/topics/healthcare/articles/2020/06/02/445587-doximity-dialer-video-bridging-telemedicine-divide.htm>

26. <https://www.healthtechzone.com/topics/healthcare/articles/2020/06/02/445587-doximity-dialer-video-bridging-telemedicine-divide.htm>

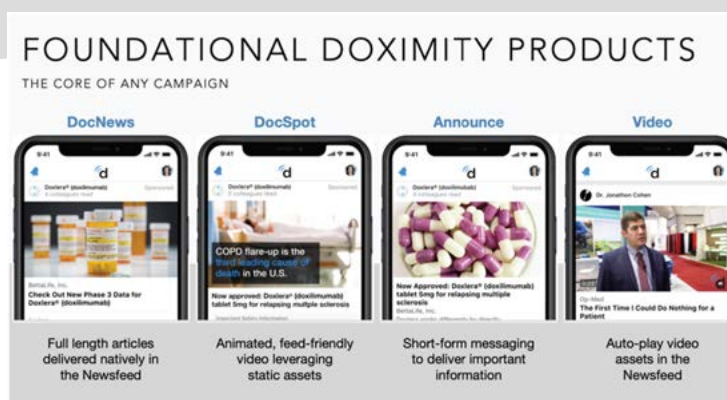
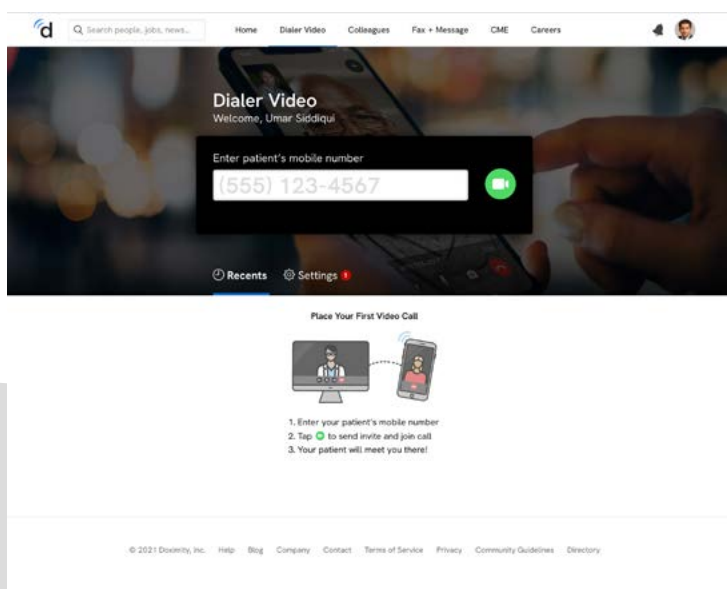
27. <https://www.healthtechzone.com/topics/healthcare/articles/2020/06/02/445587-doximity-dialer-video-bridging-telemedicine-divide.htm>

How brands can partner with Doximity:

Doximity encourages **content-driven partnerships with pharmaceutical marketers**.²⁸

After each campaign, Doximity provides both performance metrics and contact information for members who engaged with the material.²⁹

- **Sponsor content:** More than a million articles are read every month on **DocNews**, Doximity's newsfeed. Brands can run Sponsored Stories in the DocNews feed for twenty-eight days, with anything from links to whitepapers and webinars, to events and announcements, to video content.³⁰
- **Create a short animation** featuring your existing assets for **DocSpot**.³¹
- **Send messages:** Colleague Connect, Doximity's physician-to-physician messaging platform, allows marketers to send messages that blend promotion with relationship-building, popular examples include announcements about new data, study results, and partnerships.³²



28. <https://glasscanopy.com/marketing-to-doctors-part-4-lead-generation/>

29. <http://messagelabmedia.com/marketing-on-doximity-what-you-need-to-know/>

30. <http://messagelabmedia.com/marketing-on-doximity-what-you-need-to-know/>

31. <https://blog.hospitalsolutions.doximity.info/blog/the-secret-sauce-of-our-client-success-team>

32. <http://messagelabmedia.com/marketing-on-doximity-what-you-need-to-know/>

SKIPTA: MICRO-TARGETING OPPORTUNITIES

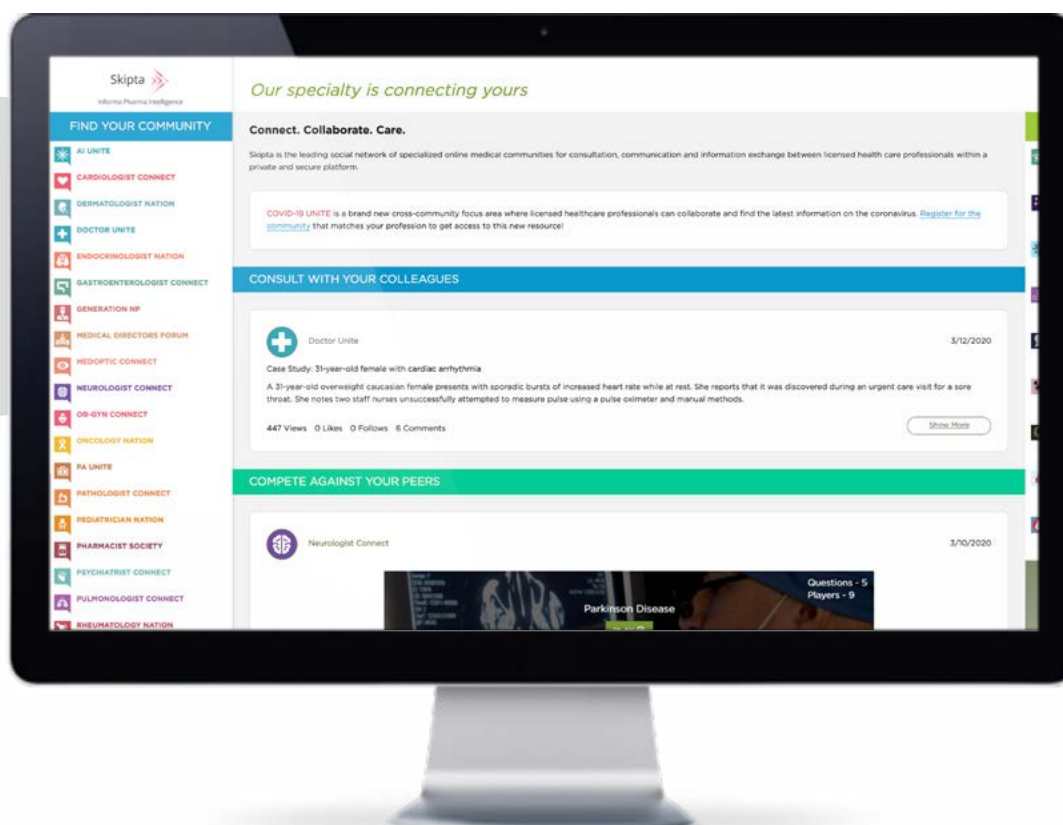
Skipta, founded in 2009, has more than 700,000 verified US HCPs and medical students signed on to its platform. **Skipta is a series of private, heavily gated, specialty communities where case sharing and clinical conversations are the name of the game.** Scientific and medical news is curated; physicians can participate in medical case challenges to test or show off their diagnostic or treatment skills. Skipta offers insights into the mindsets and workflows of active physicians. Hosting more than 30 online medical micro-communities,

from “Cardiologist Connect” to “Urology Nation,” as well as focused discussions on specific conditions, from Covid to diabetes to sleep disorders, Skipta lets specialists and HCPs interested in specific diseases and conditions easily find colleagues and peers for specific conversations and questions.³³ The community **micro-sites also house libraries, discussion groups, calendar postings, and alerts.**

Going deeper into those communities, **HCPs can find even more specific, targeted areas.** In the Medical Directors

Forum, for example, members can find group pages dedicated to specific sectors like hospitals, veterans’ affairs, Medicare, group practice, employer, behavioral health, managed care, correctional facility, and long-term care.³⁴

In our experience, member engagement in these community platforms tends to be low for both volume and activity; brands with cross-community appeal may be able to reach more members sponsoring splash page ads, as seen here.

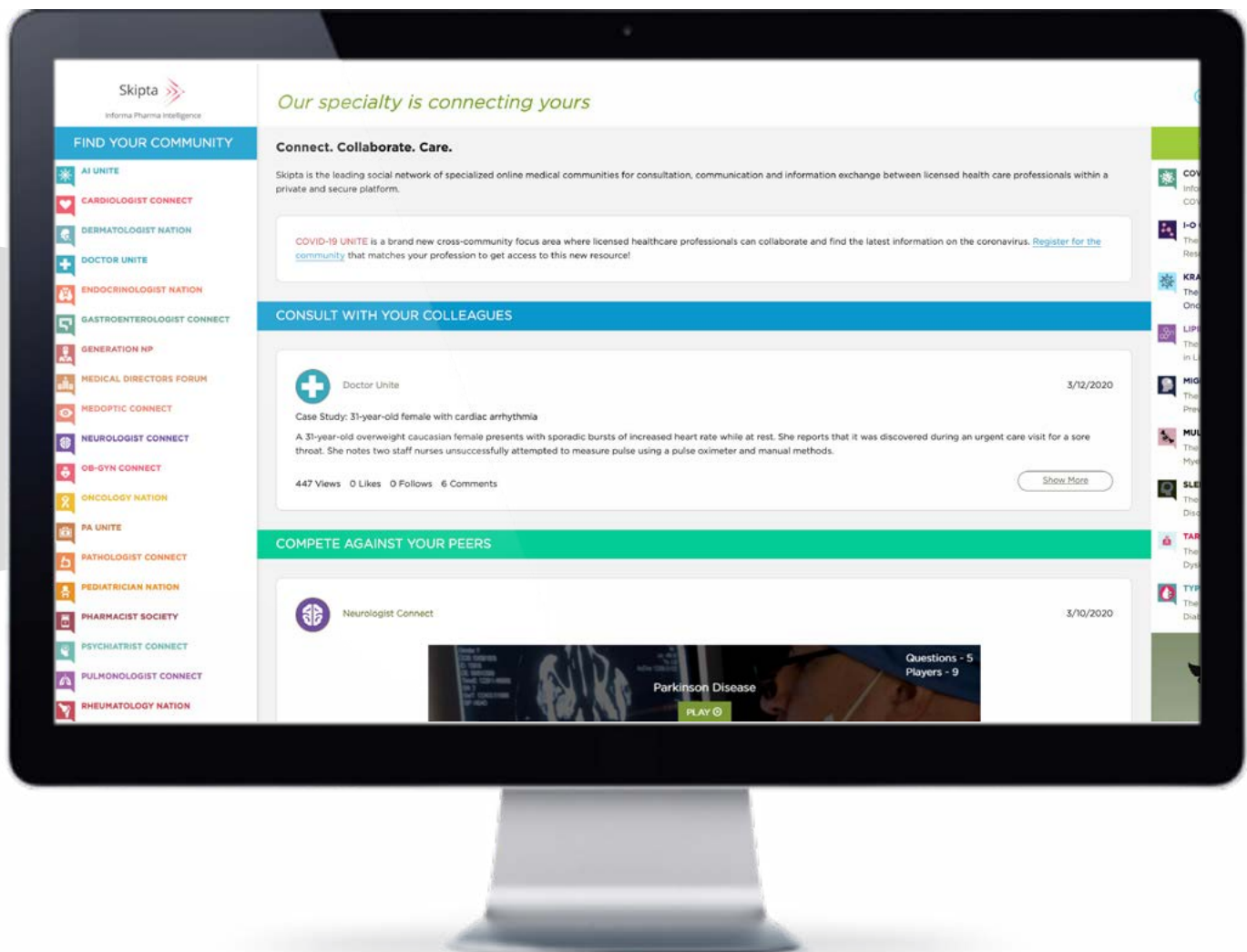


33. <https://skipta.com/faqs/>

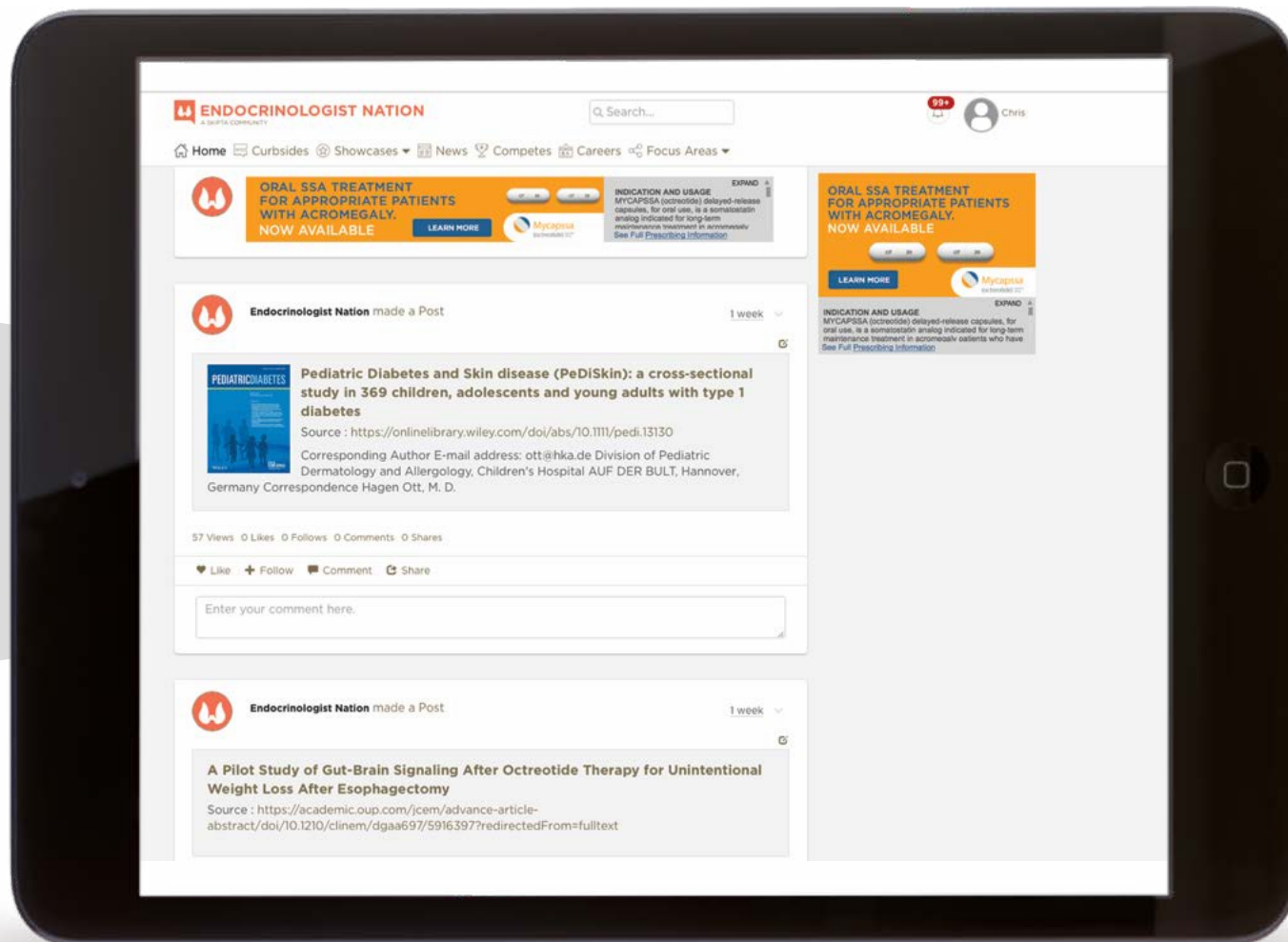
34. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4103576/>

How brands can partner with Skipta:
Skipta's communities and forums offer brands a **highly targeted way to reach specific audiences**, giving brands the ability to target any of its communities with:³⁵

- **Promotion** on-site and in monthly community e-newsletters
- **Interactive** quizzes and discussion posts
- **Targeted** emails



BEST IN CLASS



Treatments for rare diseases often face the challenge of targeting exactly the right physicians. **Chiasma found an appropriate placement for its acromegaly (giantism) treatment on Skipta's Endocrinologist Nation.**

FIGURE 1: “INSTAGRAM” FOR HCPs

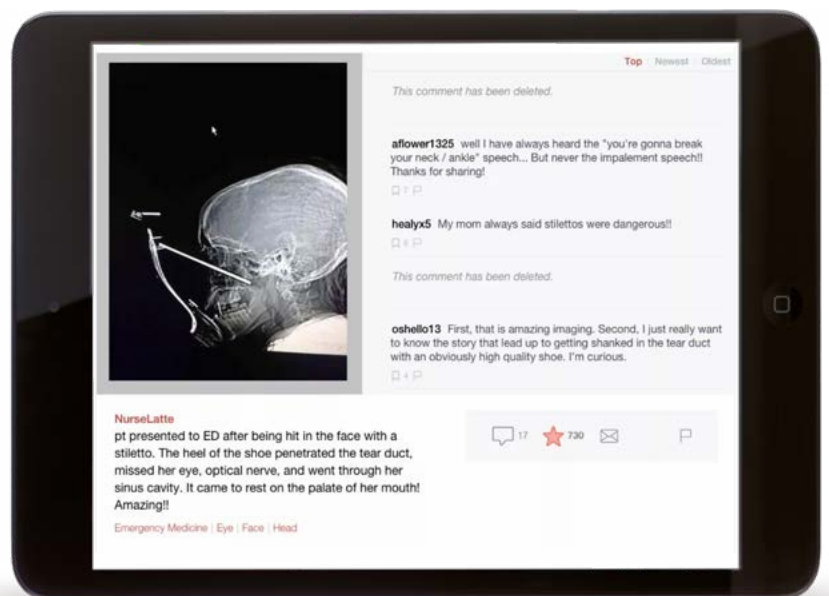
A mobile app, **Figure1** plays right into the changing needs of over **3 million** younger and tech-savvy doctors around the world.

[source for graphic: Figure1]



Figure 1 is like a medical Instagram **focused on visuals and images**. Arranged by specialties and anatomical areas, the platform features visual examples of clinical issues, valuable for reference and decision-making, often at the point of care. The platform is open to doctors, nurses, pharmacists, paramedics, and other allied health professionals who use the built-in search functionality to find relevant material.

Doctors post images, tagged with keywords for anatomy and specialty, along with brief descriptions of the patient and the condition. While only verified HCPs can share and comment, the images can actually be viewed by anyone with the app.³⁶



[source]

How brands can partner with Figure1³⁷:

Figure1 limits its promotional inventory to create brand exclusivity.

Figure1 also amplifies brand posts in its own social media feed, in-app promotions, targeted email to members, and in-app push notifications.

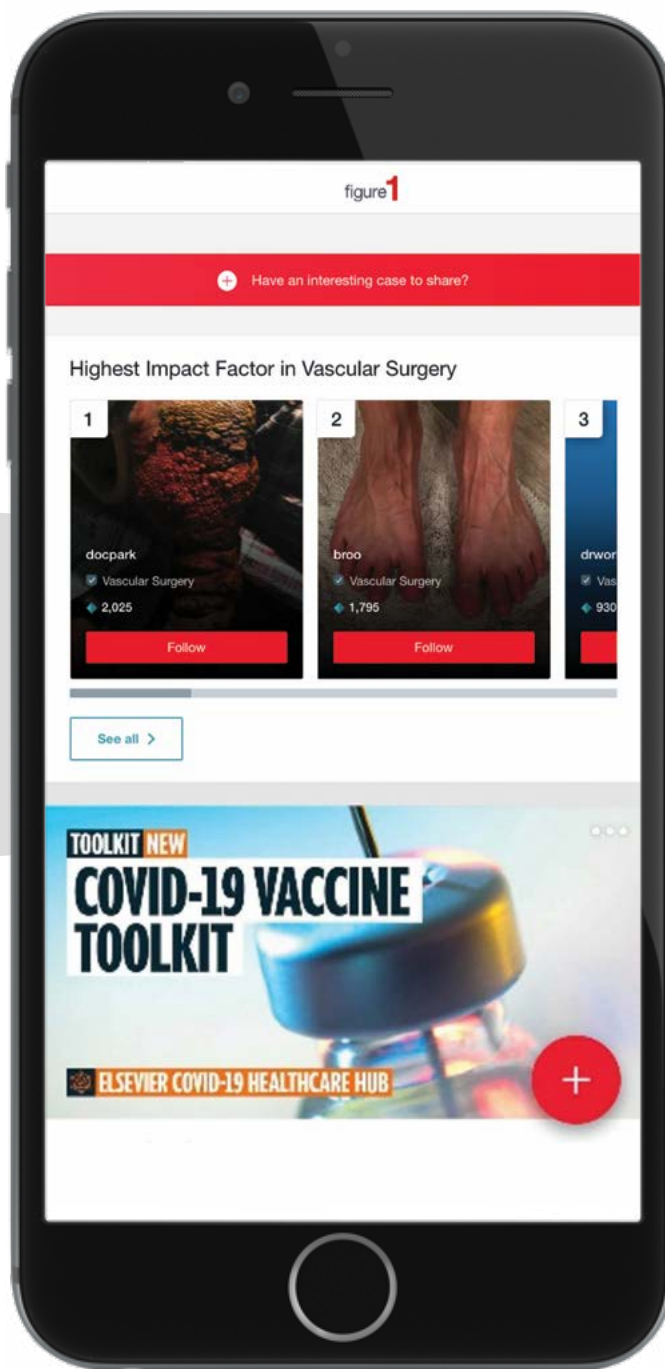
- **In-app campaigns**, including tactics like snap quizzes, educational data and cases, even influencer presentations. Impact Surveys measure campaign learnings and potential patient impact.
- **Sponsored Podcasts**: 130K+ downloads of Season 1. 96% of each 10-minute episode consumed.
- **Sponsored emails** of The Differential Newsletter, including a relevant brand case.



BEST IN CLASS

While on-site banners are limited, we appreciate how, with their Covid-19 Vaccination Toolkit, Elsevier uses Figure1's

available inventory to **speak directly to one of HCPs' most urgent needs.**



TWO SPECIALIZED TARGETING OPPORTUNITIES

The major platforms allow you to target by specialty, and in most cases, by demographics as well. But here are two highly specialized sites we like for developing influencers and relationships over time.

The Student Doctor Network: Reaches nearly 700,000 members, from pre-med students to attending physicians via on-site banners and third-party ad platforms, including Google Ads.
^{38,39,40}

MomMD: An online community and educational resource for women in medicine.⁴¹

While membership is small, it's active; forum topics can receive up to thousands of posts. Banner and contextual advertising are provided through third-party companies, including e-Healthcaresolutions and Google.⁴²

But Wait, There's More

While you're connecting with HCPs in their preferred social media, don't forget about the other medical information sites they use daily. Here are our top three non-social recommendations for marketers targeting doctors.



**Pre-med students
Attending physicians**



Women in Medicine



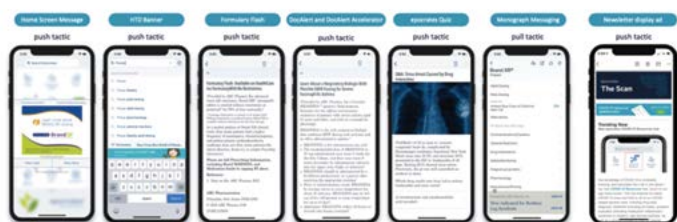
**HCPs
Doctors**

This walled garden is truly closed to brands

UpToDate is an excellent source of information for HCPs and marketers researching diseases and conditions. Unusually for this space, though, UpToDate does not accept advertising of any kind on its site or apps.

EPOCRATES: THE #1 REFERENCE APP FOR HCPs⁴³

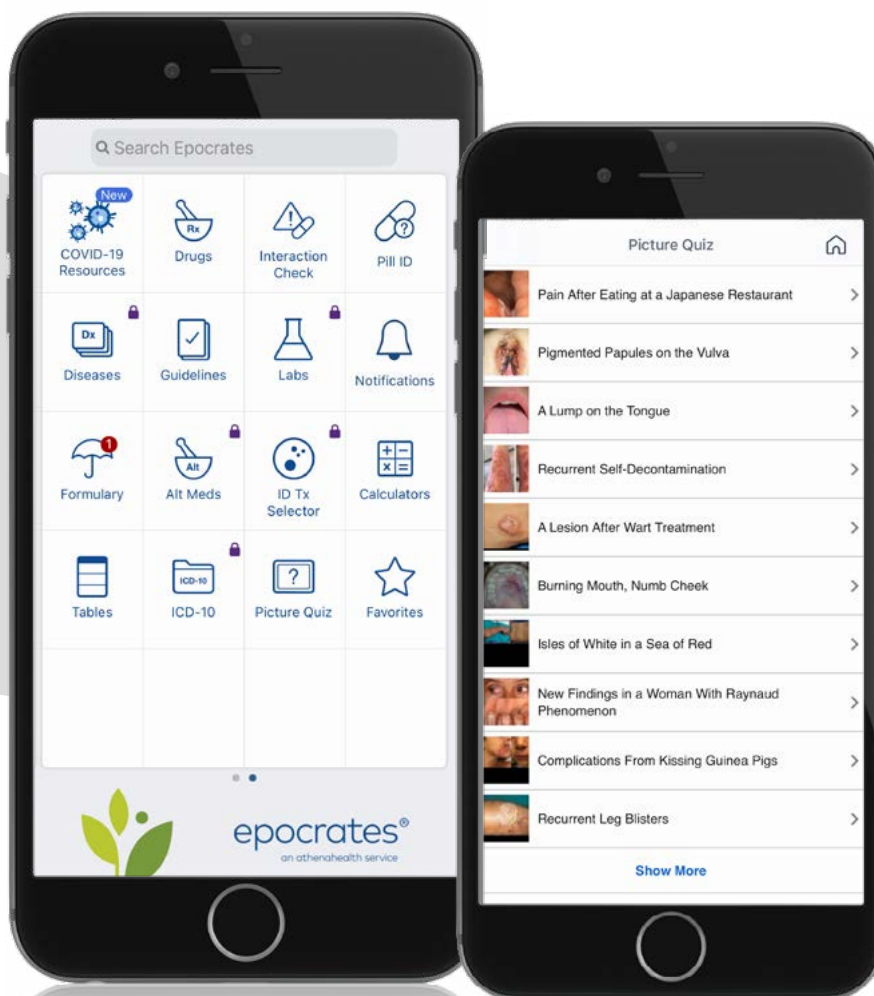
With 1MM registered physicians, **epocrates** is the go-to app for quick medical reference, with almost 400,000 drug searches per day. Almost half of its members check the app at least once a day, and a third use it multiple times a day.



How brands can partner with epocrates:

With its emphasis on therapeutic information, epocrates is **geared toward both push and pull announcements about therapeutic updates** and information. Marketers have multiple opportunities to target HCPs on epocrates via:

- Home screen messaging
- Optimized in-app search
- Epocrates quizzes
- Customized content via DocAlert
- Formulary updates via Formulary Flash
- Monograph messaging that educates HCPs on your brand's clinical information.



[Image source: epocrates sales deck].

MEDSCAPE: THE “NEW YORK TIMES” FOR HCPs⁴⁴

Reaching 730,000 physicians and 1.9 million other healthcare professionals worldwide, including medical students, residents, nurses, and more,⁴⁵ **Medscape is the largest news site for HCPs around the world**, with numerous opportunities for brand marketers to advertise to, and conduct research with, relevant specialists on site and on their mobile app. It has its own social-media functionality with Consult, an in-app only resource for HCPs to discuss treatment challenges and crowdsource information from peers.

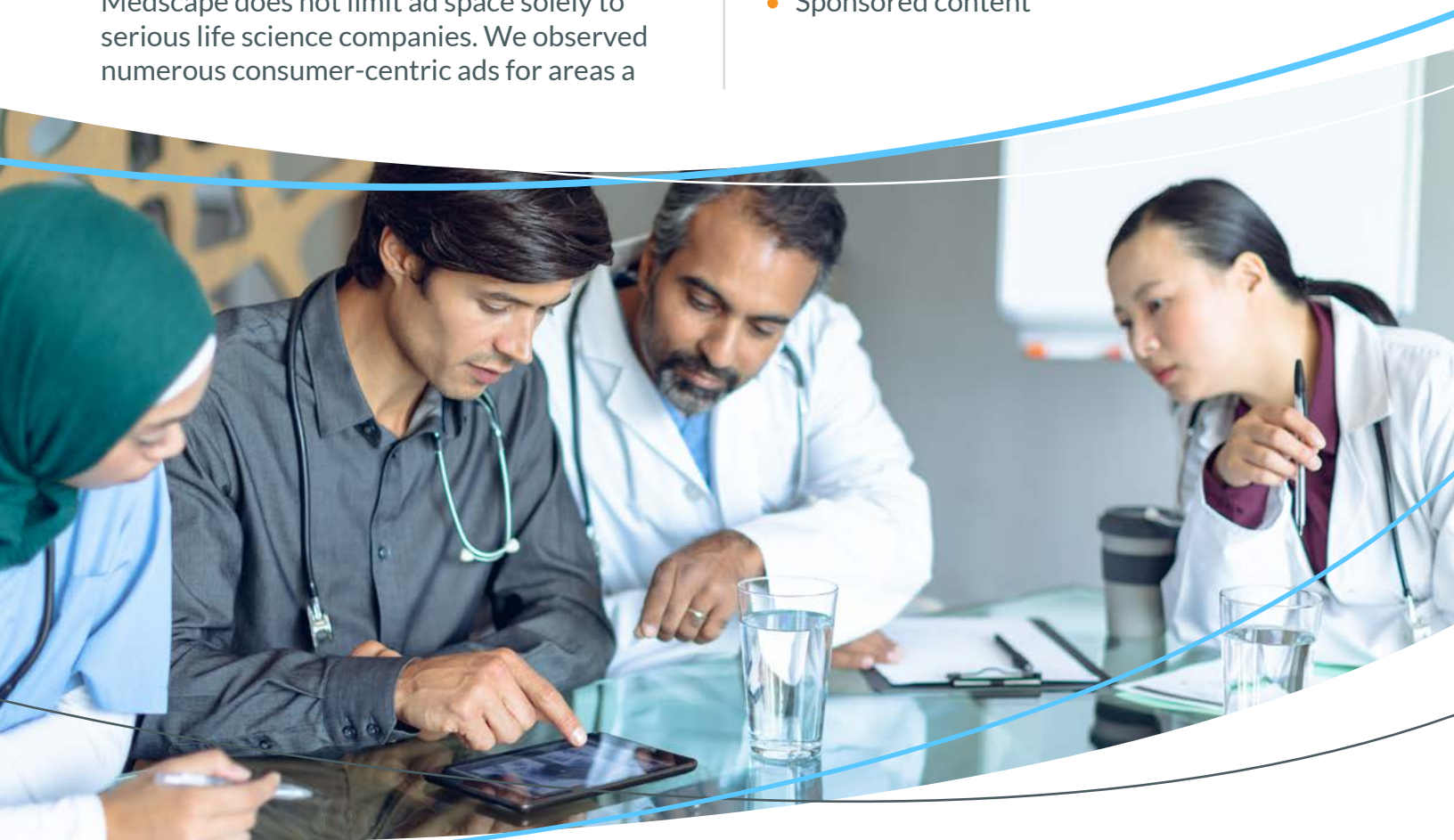
Brands targeting HCPs should be aware that Medscape does not limit ad space solely to serious life science companies. We observed numerous consumer-centric ads for areas a

diverse as insurance and consumer packaged goods (CPG). In our experience, **the site may limit ad views after a user has been on site for a period of time**, with ads either not appearing, or not refreshing.

How brands can partner with Medscape:

As part of WebMD, Medscape has robust opportunities for brands to reach targeted HCPs on both the site and mobile app, including:⁴⁶

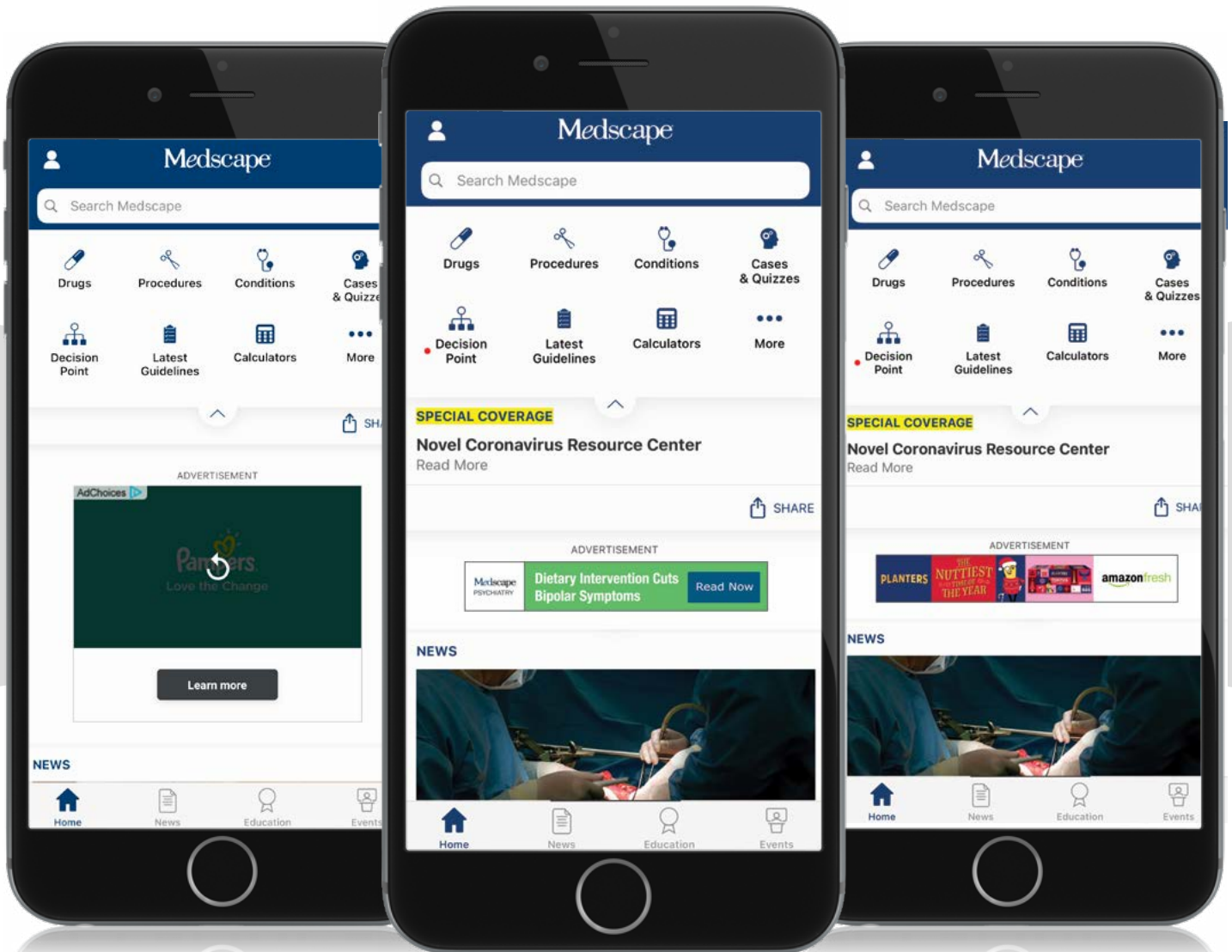
- Promotion, including banners, badges, contextual and native advertising
- Content modules, links, and microsites
- Sponsored content

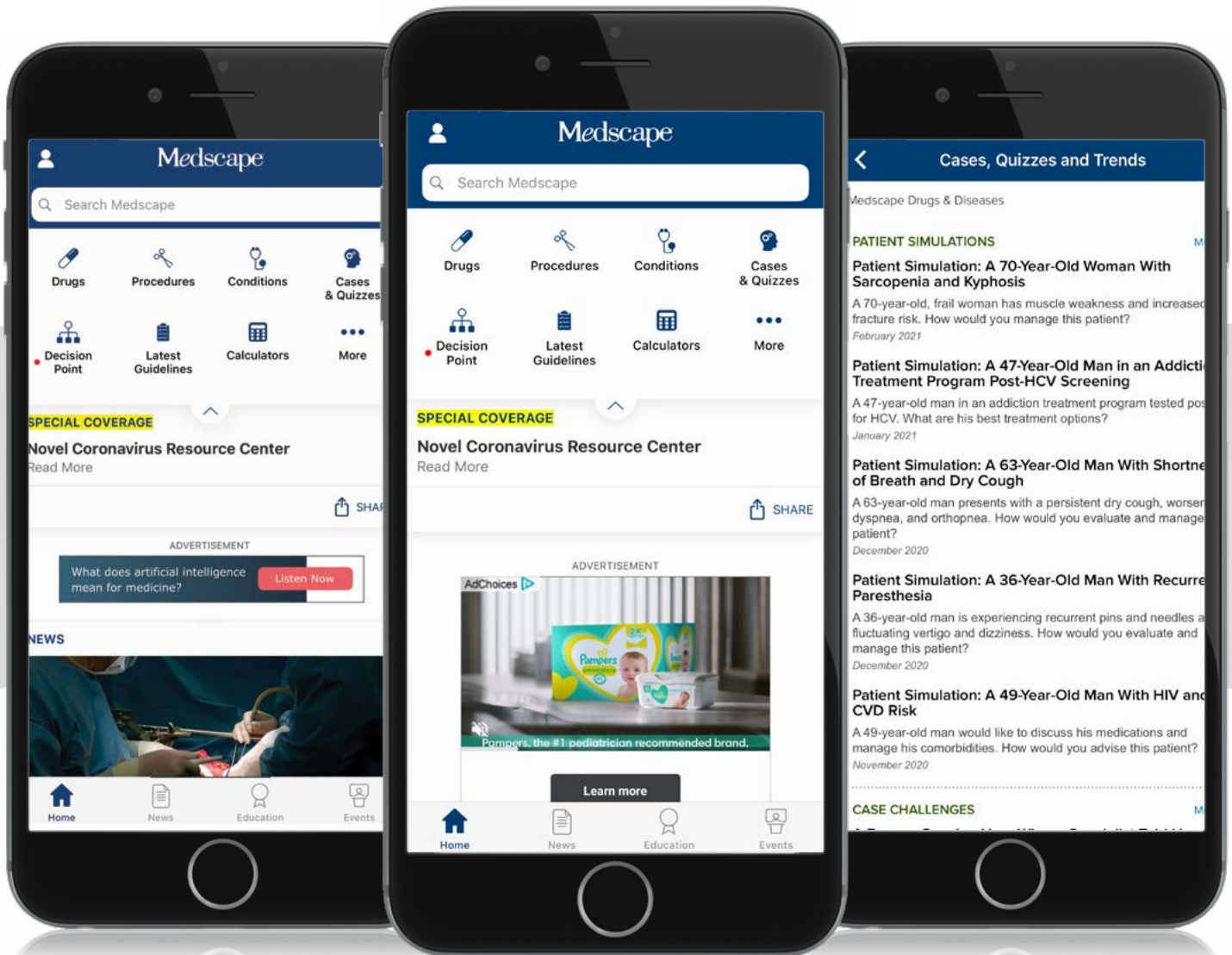


⁴⁴. <https://www.medscape.com/public/about>

⁴⁵. <https://www.medscape.com/sites/public/marketresearch>

⁴⁶. <https://www.medscape.com/public/adpolicy>





MEDPAGE TODAY: CLINICAL AND POLICY NEWS

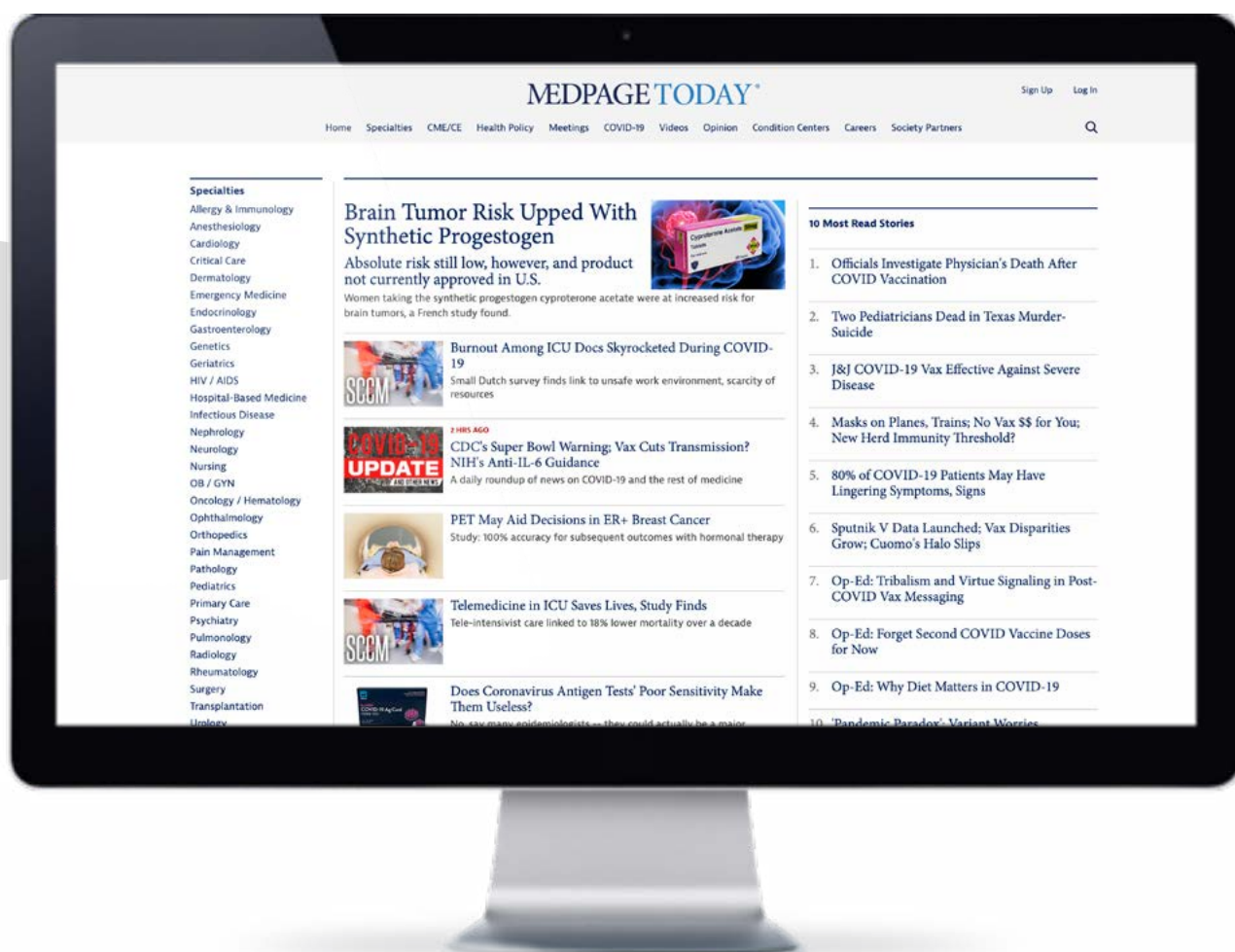
Like MedScape, **MedPageToday reaches about two-thirds of all US doctors**, with 760,000 registered users. The site receives about 3 million visits every month, and a half-million HCPs also receive MedPageToday's e-newsletter. It also sends practice-focused newsletters to thousands of specialists.⁴⁷

Unlike Medscape, **MedPageToday offers a consistent array of HCP-targeted dynamic/refreshing ads ranging from therapeutics to targeted CME to webpage services.**

How brands can partner with MedPageToday:

As part of EverydayHealth, MedPageToday has robust opportunities for brands to reach targeted HCPs. Note that MedPageToday has strict rules enforcing how paid ads and content are placed to maintain editorial independence.⁴⁸

- Promotion, including ads, banners, contextual and native advertising
- Sponsored content, including webinars and podcasts



BEST IN CLASS

Of the many home page banners we've seen on MedPageToday, this one for Talzena gets it right by **highlighting the scientific evidence** that today's HCPs prefer.

ADVERTISEMENT

<p>A proven treatment option for adults with deleterious or suspected deleterious gBRCA-mutated HER2-negative locally advanced or metastatic breast cancer¹</p> <p>Select patients based on an FDA-approved companion diagnostic for TALZENNA.¹</p> <p><small>gBRCA=germline breast cancer susceptibility gene; HER2=human epidermal growth factor receptor 2.</small></p>	<p>Important Safety Information and Indication</p> <p>Myelodysplastic Syndrome/Acute Myeloid Leukemia (MDS/AML) have been reported in patients who received TALZENNA. Overall, MDS/AML has been reported in 2 out of 504 (0.39%) patients.</p> <p>Full Prescribing Information</p>
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KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **HCP social sites are here HCPs can let their guard down**, connecting with peers, mentors, and KOLs from all over the world – with the assurance that all information and opinions are coming from valid medical sources.
- Sermo is the only site that **allows users to be anonymous**, potentially increasing the honesty of their shared opinions.
- **Doximity offers the largest numbers of members**, with workflow tools like Doximity Dialer that increase HCPs' reliance on the site and regular traffic to its active job board.
- Figure1 is the "Instagram" of HCP social media, **offering quick, visual posts that can only be shared by HCPs**, but viewed by anyone.
- **Specialized networks** exist for hyper-targeting, including Skipta communities, MomMD and The Student Doctor Network.
- **Our top three picks for non-social digital marketing include epocrates, MedPageToday and MedScape.**



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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