



Consider the Podcasting Option

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DID YOU KNOW THAT podcasting is already a \$400 million dollar industry, and that 60 million Americans are expected to be active podcasters by this time next year? Podcasting is defined as the presentation of a digital media file that is made available on the Internet for downloading

to a portable media player or a computer. Podcasting is not really all that new of a concept for pharmacists. Many pharmacy accredited continuing education (CE) programs are now available in variety of formats, including audio, enhanced audio (where images are displayed in time with audio), and video podcasts (also known as vodcasts). Increasingly, pharmacists have begun to use CE podcasts from an Internet source, or they download them directly to a personal, portable media player. The popularity of these podcast CE programs is believed to be increasing because they give pharmacists complete control over when, where, and how they choose to listen and/or watch.

While many pharmacists may be familiar with podcasts from their experiences as an end user, very few have actually ever developed and broadcast a podcast programs for their patients. There is no reason why pharmacists shouldn't take advantage of this technology to better reach their patients and enhance their own marketing strategies.

REASONS FOR PODCASTING

Podcasting can help you enhance your patient communication, especially for patients with low health literacy. Here, health literacy is defined as the degree to which individuals have the capability to obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions. Examples of health literacy include the ability of individuals to understand instructions on prescription bottles, leaflets, and patient education bro-

chures. One study shows that inadequate literacy was common and strongly correlated with poorer knowledge of asthma and improper metered-dose inhaler (MDI) use. Similarly, inadequate health literacy is associated with worse glycemic control and higher rates of retinopathy among patients with type 2 diabetes. To improve health literacy, it is recommended that pharmacists go beyond simple verbal recommendations and brochures by incorporating information presented in an audio, enhanced audio, or video format when educating patients. We recommend that podcast programs in these formats should be considered as one method to increase patients' ability to comprehend and retain health information.

Another reason to get involved in podcasting is to improve your pharmacy's competitive advantage. As the number of podcast users continues to grow, there is no better time for you to capitalize on podcasting. Adding podcasting to your communication channels will have a positive impact on your pharmacies. Podcasting is a convenient, effective way for you to distribute news about pharmacy services, and to help you create a niche while offering your tech savvy employees another way to help you promote your practice.

WHAT SHOULD YOU PODCAST?

Given that podcasts allow you to connect with patients in a novel way, consider that numerous patient education programs are ready right now for downloading and can be made available for podcasting to patients. Depending on the resources available in your pharmacy, these patient education podcasts can be accessible through your pharmacy's Web site and/or a computer in the

patient waiting area. Decisions on which specific topics to podcast would depend on your patients' demographics and your pharmacy's service focus.

An example of patient education programs would be a podcast on MDI technique. As many patients do not know how to properly use an MDI, it is recommended that pharmacists demonstrate the proper technique for usage to the patients. Instead of having you repeatedly demonstrate the technique to every patient with MDI equipment, you can make a podcast of the technique and make it readily available in the store and on the pharmacy Web site. After the patients viewed the podcast on MDI usage, you could talk with the patients to reinforce the importance of the proper technique and ask the patients to demonstrate the technique. Using podcasting to educate patients in conjunction with verbal communication is an efficient and effective way to utilize your time while enhancing the quality of patient communication.

Podcasting equipment is simple. A computer (PC or Mac), microphone, and recording software are needed to podcast *patient education programs* and/or marketing tools.

Another example of patient education podcasts is related to diabetes management. You can offer a series of education programs such as dieting and exercise, diabetes foot complications, and blood glucose monitoring. If these podcasts are accessible on a computer in the waiting area, patients can listen to or view these education programs while waiting for prescriptions to be filled. Further, you can consider putting podcast programs on your pharmacy's Web site. In this way, patients can also later view the programs at their convenience at any place of their choice.


Certainly, you can also create in-house podcast programs that are customized to fit with your patients' needs. However, there are thousands of readily available podcasts that have been devel-

oped by reputable organizations, which you may create a link to or ask for permission to use (for educational purposes). For example, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has developed many podcast programs such as programs related to arthritis, influenza, and cervical cancer that you may find useful (see: <http://www2a.cdc.gov/podcasts/browse.asp> to explore these resources).

Along with patient education programs, you can use podcasting as a way to market your patient care services, dispensing services and any other promotional offers. You can certainly podcast your services on your pharmacy Web site. Having audio and/or video podcasts can be attractive to many groups, including adolescents, young adults, and people with visual impairments.

TECHNOLOGY NEEDED TO PODCAST

Before we discuss technology necessary for podcasting, we encourage you to plan topics to be discussed, write a script, and plan the length of your program in advance; this will help produce a professional quality podcast. During the first minute or so, it is recommended that you introduce yourself and provide an overview of what you will be discussing. During this introduction, a musical jingle can be incorporated to make it more interesting to the audience. Please note that copyrighted music should not be used and a huge amount of free music is available.

Podcasting equipment is simple. A computer (PC or a Mac), microphone, and recording software are needed to podcast patient education programs and/or marketing tools. An external microphone should be used to increase the audio quality of your recording. Any audio recording and editing software that supports the creation of an MP3 file format can be used. For example, Google the word Audacity to download free software that is compatible across platforms for Mac OS X and Windows. If a Mac is available, it probably already came equipped with GarageBand that can be used to record and edit an MP3 file. Moreover, for video podcasts, many software applications can be used, including Apple's iMovie software and Windows Movie Maker and Jaycut work on PCs. 

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