



Medicine. Social Media. Quality. For Free.

Open access social media guidelines for pharma

December, 2011

First version

„A set of guidelines created collaboratively by the most important online voices of pharma and social media designed to facilitate online interaction with and within pharma.“

[#pharmaSMguide](https://twitter.com/pharmaSMguide)



Table of contents

1) Introduction.....	2
2) A Physician’s Rules of Engagement.....	3
3) Pharma’s Rules of Engagement.....	4
4) How pharma should use social media.....	5
5) How pharma should use Wikipedia.....	7
6) How pharma should use Facebook.....	8
7) How pharma should use Twitter.....	9
8) How pharma should write blogs.....	10
9) How pharma should use Youtube.....	11
10) Acknowledgement.....	12
11) Contact addresses.....	13



1

Introduction

FDA and other authorities have been trying to deal with the rapid adoption of social media but they have not been able to publish the required guidance about how pharma can engage with social media.

At Webicina.com, we decided to launch a project with a mission of creating a set of open access social media guidelines for and about the pharma industry with the help of an expert crowd.

This is "the key principles in a manifesto type document" which can be the overview for pharma to follow. The guidance outlines the key principles such as protecting patients, keeping healthcare professionals informed, being transparent, reporting the Adverse Events, or following applicable codes and regulations in social media.

After months of hard collaborative work, we now publish „A Physician’s Rules of Engagement”; a „Pharma’s Rules of Engagement”; Key Principles about how pharma should use social media and technology specific guides as well.

We hope this guide will initiate an even more extended collaboration and we, healthcare professionals, e-patients and pharma, can facilitate the process for the FDA of publishing its own guide.

Show your support or feedback your thoughts on Twitter using [#pharmaSMguide](https://twitter.com/pharmaSMguide).

Join this project and see more details including positive and negative pharma-related social media case studies on Webicina!

Best regards,

Dr. Bertalan Mesko
Managing director of Webicina.com

&

Dr. Felix Jackson
Chief Medical Officer of medDigital

2

A Physician's Rules of Engagement

*A physician's perspective on how pharma
should engage with physicians in social media*

1) Work with me to improve my patient's care:

- **Understand my needs.** Make it easy for me to access your expertise and listen to me online.
- **Engage with me.** Don't just promote or try to influence me.
- **Communicate with me.** Using both online and offline channels.
- **Protect my private data.** Both my personal data and my clinical research data.
- **Get my permission.** You have my permission when I've given it to you.

2) Keep our patients safe:

- **Conduct ethical research.** And communicate your successes online.
- **Manufacture the best medicines.** Maintaining the highest standards of quality.
- **Market only licensed medicines.** And keep me informed even online about those in development.
- **Be transparent in everything you do.** Or someone else will be on your behalf!
- **Improve your knowledge.** Understand and report adverse events on your medicines by listening online.

3) Work with each other:

- **Stay within your codes and regulations.** Use these principles with your codes and regulations to understand your responsibilities.
- **Share your learnings.** Share your metrics to identify success and understand failure across the industry.
- **Improve your codes and regulations.** Give and share feedback to improve these principles. Use these principles to revise your codes and regulations.



3

Pharma's Rules of Engagement

*Pharma's perspective on how people
should engage with pharma in social media*

1. Medical professionals: Work with me

- **Improve patient care:** Work with me transparently so I can use your expertise to improve our medicines.
- **Listen to me:** We have complex regulations we must follow, please understand when we follow them.
- **Engage with me:** We may be a company but we still want to communicate with you online.
- **Communicate with me:** A private social media message is often as good as a face to face talk.

2. Patients: We work for you

- **We cannot give you personal medical advice:** If it is a personal medical matter, see your healthcare professional for advice.
- **Report suspected side effects:** We need to understand our medicines better, and you have the knowledge we need.
- **We are listening:** Tell us how we can help improve your care, because sometimes we might be able to help.



4

How should pharma use social media?

Key Principles

When engaging in social media, consider how to:

- **Be human.** Ensure that you engage with people as people. Explain what you are doing and why, particularly if you are moderating comments.
- **Be helpful.** Answer questions and link to additional information. Direct enquiries you can't answer elsewhere, perhaps to their doctor or your medical information department, with a clear explanation why.
- **Speak plainly.** No jargon, no technical words. Keep in mind you are talking to people outside your industry.
- **Respond quickly.** Organize your internal approvals to ensure responses happen within 48 hours. You don't have to be online 24/7.
- **Enable social sharing.** Sharing content and discussing it elsewhere are important but consider who you provided the content for and where it is shared.
- **Enable comments.** Social media is all about engagement and discussion so enable comments where possible.
- **Avoid moderation.** If you have to moderate, try not to pre-moderate and clearly state what you will moderate and why. Publish your moderation policy.
- **Avoid editing comments.** Do not edit the comments you moderate as it changes the meaning. People don't like this. Remove the comment and explain why.
- **Manage negativity.** Gently engage with people making inappropriate comments and explain your point of view, particularly if you are moderating the comments.
- **Stop when finished.** Close finished campaigns and redirect people to other places.

5

How should pharma use Wikipedia?

Wikipedia is not a patient guide or drug formulary, it is an encyclopedia.

Companies are in a unique position to provide additional knowledge. We'd love every article about a drug to contain information about its regulatory status around the world, its development, its manufacturing process, and its commercial history, such as the companies that developed it and the annual sales.

We believe that you can freely edit Wikipedia articles about your medicines if you follow the following principles.

Consider how to:

- **Be transparent.** Clearly state who you are and what your intent is.
- **Clarify your intent.** Make the rationale for the edit clear in the Edit history or on the Discussion page.
- **Do not promote.** Do not edit an article to promote your medicine.
- **Speak plainly.** No jargon, no technical words. Keep in mind you are talking to people outside your industry.
- **Select your audience.** Ensure we know who the edit is for clarify which country license applies where appropriate.
- **Understand your medicine's licence.** Care needs to be taken when referring to off-licence data to ensure that information is balanced, informative and non-promotional.

You may also wish to:

- **Suggest edits.** Suggest edits on the Discussion page for other editors to make. But you still need to be transparent about who you are and explain your rationale.
- **Appoint a specific company spokesperson.** To be the point of contact for your medicine.

See [Wikipedia:Manual of Style/Medicine-related articles](#) and [Wikipedia:Identifying reliable sources \(medicine\)](#) for details and feel free to ask the community if you need help on [Wikipedia talk:WikiProject Pharmacology](#).



6

How should pharma use Facebook?

Facebook is a very important place to be. It can be used for promoting certain medicines in some countries, but many countries do not allow direct to consumer advertising. In these countries it is still very important for non-promotional activities like patient recruitment into clinical trials and raising disease awareness.

People expect companies to behave in a certain way on Facebook. The Key Principles above will help you meet these expectations.

Consider how to:

- **Respond quickly.** Organize your internal approvals to ensure responses happen within 48 hours. You don't have to be online 24/7.
- **Enable comments.** Social media is all about engagement and discussion so enable comments where possible.
- **Avoid moderation.** If you have to moderate, try not to pre-moderate and clearly state what you will moderate and why.
- **Avoid editing comments.** Do not edit the comments you moderate as it changes the meaning. People don't like this. Remove the comment and explain why.
- **Manage negativity.** Gently engage with people making inappropriate comments and explain your point of view, particularly if you are moderating the comments.
- **Stop when finished.** Close finished campaigns and redirect people to other places.
- **Be clear:** Provide information about the company with contact details and clearly state who publishes comments on behalf of the company. People prefer talking with a real person, not a brand or a company.

The Facebook logo, consisting of the word "facebook" in white lowercase letters on a blue rectangular background.

7

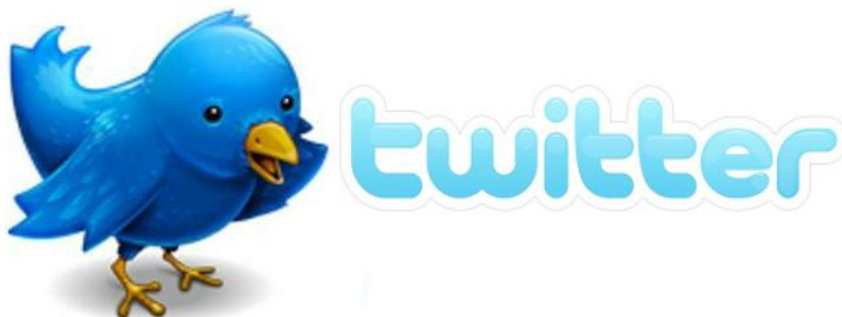
How should pharma use Twitter?

Twitter is useful for publishing quick updates about a company's activities. Link tweets back to your own websites to provide your followers quick access to your important news and information.

Consider how to:

- **Be informative.** For example, publish corporate news and non-promotional information.
- **Select your audience.** Use different accounts for different audiences so that people can follow content which is tailored and appropriate for them. Examples include investors, shareholders, journalists, job seekers, patients and customers.
- **Understand your medicine's licence.** Care needs to be taken when referring to off-licence data to ensure that information is balanced, informative and non-promotional.
- **Be helpful.** Answer questions and link to additional information. Direct enquiries you can't answer elsewhere, perhaps to their doctor or your medical information department, with a clear explanation why.
- **Respond quickly.** Organize your internal approvals to ensure responses happen within 48 hours. You don't have to be online 24/7.
- **Publish more than 140 chars.** Use longer messages with services like Twitlonger to include additional information.

Be clear: Provide information about the company with contact details and clearly state who publishes tweets on behalf of the company. People prefer talking with a real person, not a brand or a company.



8

How should pharma write blogs?

Blogs are an excellent way for a company to begin its journey into social media. They enable close control of the content because the articles can be written and approved entirely by the company. The content can be updated in the companies own timeframes, perhaps weekly, monthly or even less frequently!

Furthermore, it is one of the few social media tools where it is acceptable to pre-moderate comments. Your blog readers know that it is owned by you, so they understand if you want to only publish the comments you find acceptable.

Consider how to:

- **Be human.** Ensure that you engage with people as people. Explain what you are doing and why, particularly if you are moderating comments.
- **Speak plainly.** No jargon, no technical words. Keep in mind you are talking to people outside your industry.
- **Understand your medicine's licence.** Care needs to be taken when referring to off-licence data to ensure that information is balanced, informative and non-promotional.
- **Enable comments.** Blogs work best with discussion so enable comments if you can.
- **Avoid moderation.** If you have to moderate, try not to pre-moderate and clearly state what you will moderate and why. Publish your moderation policy.
- **Avoid editing comments.** Do not edit the comments you moderate as it changes the meaning. People don't like this. Remove the comment and explain why.
- **Manage negativity.** Gently engage with people making inappropriate comments and explain your point of view, particularly if you are moderating the comments.
- **Deal with blogging issues:** Declare the license you use for the content you publish on your blog. Provide clear blog description and contact information. Disclaimer and author information are also needed.

9

How should pharma use Youtube?

Like Facebook, YouTube is a public place. You can restrict access to your videos if you need to, but YouTube is really to “broadcast yourself” or your company.

Use YouTube channels for your company news and specific campaigns. Update them regularly or have them as a static video library. There are many ways to make YouTube a key part of any digital activity.

Generally speaking, if you have a video appropriate for the public, then you’re mad if you don’t put it on YouTube. After all, it generates the worlds second largest number of searches after Google itself.

Consider how to:

- Be transparent.** If it’s your content, it should be your channel. Or at least clearly state your involvement
 - Avoid direct to consumer promotion.** YouTube is a public place so you should only share promotional videos if permitted by your regulations.
 - Enable comments.** Social media is all about engagement and discussion so enable comments where possible.
 - Manage negativity.** Gently engage with people making inappropriate comments and explain your point of view, particularly if you are moderating the comments.
 - Stop when finished.** Close finished campaigns and redirect people to other places.
- Be clear:** Provide information about the company with contact details and clearly state who publishes comments on behalf of the company. People prefer talking with a real person, not a brand or a company.
- Tag:** Tag videos properly in order to help people find your content.



10

Acknowledgement

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And hundreds of collaborators sending suggestions, leaving comments and spreading the word.

Please join us on [Webicina](#), see the [Google Docs page](#), and let's create an extended, even more detailed second version!

Show your support or give us feedback on Twitter using [#pharmaSMguide](#)

11

Contact us!

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have any questions!

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