

Twitter Best Practices & Tips for Physicians

Overview of Twitter

Twitter at its core, is a real-time public forum and information network where anyone can read, write and share messages. Populated with small 140-character bursts of information called Tweets, users follow the latest stories, ideas, opinions and news that interest them most.

Not only will Twitter allow you to connect in real-time to those you are interested in, but you will be able to gather marketing and audience intelligence and feedback by following influencers and other key handles on Twitter.

Below we have our best practices and tips for physicians broken into three pieces, being: **Build, Monitor, and Engage**

Build Your Profile



Figure 1: (Twitter, Dr. Peter Pronovost)

Building your profile: As the point of entry for your audience, every element of your profile—your @username, photo, bio and links—should reflect your professional identity and personality. Framed below are details about how to put your best face forward on your Twitter Profile:

- **Visuals.** Your profile image and cover photo should visually represent your identity and be sized. appropriately
 - **Profile photo recommended dimensions are 400x400 pixels**
 - **Header photo recommended dimensions are 1500x500 pixels**

- Please reach out to the Internet Marketing & Strategy Team for profile and header image development and approval through our [web request form here](#).
- **Bio.** Your Twitter bio is the modern business card. Write a clear, concise bio (160 characters or less) that describes who you are and why users should follow you.
 - **Example:** Doctor, researcher, Sr. VP for Patient Safety & Quality [@HopkinsMedicine](#). Passionate about ending preventable harm & improving outcomes. RTs not endorsements

[Optimizing your profile for search](#): If you're looking to use Twitter to expand reach and increase exposure for your work, consider the following tips for optimizing your Twitter profile for the search function within Twitter and Google search:

- **SEO title** – Your Name (username) on Twitter: Your name under the Profile Settings and your username are the title tags for your profile.
- **Profile image** – Filename: When it comes to your profile image, be sure to optimize it with a personalized image and also by using your name as the filename. Twitter will automatically use your name under the Profile Settings as the ALT tag for your profile image as well.



● *Figure 2: (Twitter, Dr. Erin Michos Bio)*

- **Keywords in your bio:** Your Twitter bio information is key and it is important to include key terms related to your practice or specialty in your bio. Twitter search engines use keywords in your bio in search results when people are looking for similar people to follow.
 - In the example in figure 2, Dr. Erin Michos includes key terms such as, 'Cardiologist', 'Epidemiologist' and 'Heart Disease' in her bio.

Need help getting started? Read more Twitter Basics here: <http://bit.ly/2jUBpe3>

Build and Monitor Your Community

If possible, commit to about 10 minutes a day to ensure you are in tune with the content and conversations being talked about by those in your network. Some ways to do this are:

- **Be a good listener:** Look for Tweets that include mentions of topics for which you are an expert so that you can keep your finger on the pulse of what your audience is saying. You can do this through [Twitter search](#). Follow people of interest and share their content to build rapport and relationships in social.
- **Use Altmetrics:** After a paper is published, check to see if you can see your Altmetrics score. Your Altmetrics score is a measure of the attention that your published papers are receiving online. Follow and engage with those who are sharing and talking about your papers. You can do this, by liking or replying to their post or by retweeting them.
- **Explore your industry:** Use keywords and titles of shared basic science content as a way to find relevant people by using tools like [Tweet Reach](#) that allow you to see the individuals that tweeted a specific article. Find influencers by using [Buzzsumo.com](#).
- **Start following & make connections:** As your listening, start to follow and create connections that align with your focus. You can connect with experts in your specialty or connect with colleagues from Johns Hopkins. Our social media page can be found [here](#).
 - If possible, ensure to follow back relevant people and companies that are following you, unless it is an obvious spam account.
 - Be careful how aggressively you are following others. If you are following hundreds of users a day or using automated services, Twitter could possibly limit your account features and if you are following well more people than follow you could also influence someones decision to connect.
- **Build lists:** Monitor conversations and build relationships with specific influencers or individuals that you want to reach by creating a [Twitter list with their handle](#). You can have this as a private list where it is just for you to monitor or a public list. When you add a user to a public list, they are notified and this can help in building those soft relationships.
 - Keep in mind that when you add a user to a public list they are notified and the list is open and searchable to all users.
 - A private list, which may be used to track competitors, is only visible to you.
- **Hashtags:** The symbol # on Twitter is known as a hashtag. These tags are used to affiliate a tweet with a certain topic and can be useful for networking with peers at a

professional conference or following a specific topic. You can see a [list of healthcare hasthags here](#).

Need help with Twitter terms? Read more Twitter Basics here: <http://bit.ly/2kFvw8T>

Engage Your Community

Use an accessible and authentic tone. It's not just what you say, it's how you say it. Your audience will find you more relatable if your Tweets are authentic, conversational and responsive to their questions or current events.. Write headlines that are intriguing and newsworthy and that solicit feedback. Example: *Radiomics the future of [#kidneycancer](#) imaging and diagnostics? Not convinced either, but interesting direction [#AUA17](#)*

- **Draw people in with visuals:** Visuals are just as important as what you can say in under 140 characters. Tweets that contain images or video generally have higher engagement rates. Side note: Check out the [#VisualAbstracts](#) hashtag to see how researchers are communicating their papers in easy to digest infographics.
- **Amplify event appearances.** Identify key employees who attend industry events on a regular basis. Develop a calendar of events and draft posts to be supplemented with real-time photos or video. Use the live hashtag stream from a relevant industry event to identify and connect with users sharing content with similar messaging. Make sure to mention your peers that you know will be there.
- **Acknowledge amplifiers.** Reply when people tweet about you. Like and re-tweet positive messages, and thank those who praise you. Keep in mind that re-tweets can also represent your voice and brand personality.
- **Influencers:** Connect with influencers, especially those that share your content. This can lead to other opportunities, such as requesting that you speak at an event or contribute to a paper.
- **Formatting:** Always use a URL shortener like the [Google shortner](#). They are also often built into other tools such as [Hootsuite](#) if you choose to use these tools. You only have 140 characters and you don't want a long URL to take up your space or deter others from sharing your content.
- **Increase your chance of shares:** Keep tweets below 140 characters, ideally under 100 characters. It makes retweeting easier to do.
- **No automation:** Avoid the temptation to use tools that send automatic direct messages. These types of messages are often construed as spam and may cause people to

“unfollow” you.

- **Mention others:** You can also engage Twitter followers and influencers by including an @mention in your tweets. You can do this when you post content that you think will resonate with someone in your network. e.g. New research shows.....via @[HandleName].
- **Use Hashtags:** Record [trending hashtags](#) and terms used amongst those you want to connect with and repurpose them to bridge conversation with relevant posts.
- **Be of value:** Social media isn't just about YOU or your brand. It is about your audience therefore provide them with valuable content.
- **Stay relevant:** Twitter moves fast, so you can post upwards of 6 times a day if you have valuable content. It is recommended to post at least once per day and not just post for the sake of posting.
- **Be responsive:** You should be responsive to people when they reach out to you, but use appropriate discretion. Naturally the more you become active on social media, the more you will increase organic exposure and opportunities to connect with others. We encourage you to engage those who reach out to you, but with the appropriate discretion. For example, when connecting with existing patients, it is up to your discretion whether you would like to add them to your network. If you do add them, you should not identify them as your patient at all as this would be a violation of HIPPA.

Frequently Asked Questions

- Below are our recommendations on frequently asked questions when engaging existing or potential patients in social media:
 - **What should I do if I receive a specific health related question via social?** While general/common questions are ok to answer, you should never give specific medical advice via social channels. Here is an example of a specific medical question:
 - **Patient:** *“Hi Dr. XXXX, I have a 2.8 cm pancreatic cyst. Pet scans have cost so much even with insurance, but I did get a scan in which the doctor found a white mass on my adrenal glands. They came back benign. Could my pancreas be affecting my adrenal area?”*
 - **Appropriate Tweet Response:** *“Hi XXX, thank you for reaching out to me. I’ve sent you a DM.” (direct message)*

- **Appropriate Direct Message Response:** *Hi XXXX, thank you for reaching out to me. I am sorry to hear about what you're going through. Unfortunately, because each person's medical situation is different, I am unable to provide treatment recommendations or second opinions via this form of communication.*

If you would like to request an appointment, please call: XXX-XXX-XXXX.

- **How can I promote our services on Twitter within FTC guidelines?** As a Johns Hopkins Medicine expert, potential patients and consumers trust your recommendations, making you somewhat of an influencer for the brand. That said, it's important that you disclose that you are a medical expert at Johns Hopkins Medicine. Below are the guidelines for expert and employee endorsers: <http://bit.ly/2kFCryX>
- **Should I add a disclaimer to my profile?** It is not required. In today's social world, a disclaimer does not provide guaranteed legal protection. It's very hard to separate personal and professional comments on social and viewers could still associate you with the institution. It is at your discretion to include a disclaimer on your profile. It is best practice to remember your online identity is your responsibility.

If you would like to add a disclaimer to your profile, here is an example:

- **Example:** "Opinions updated here are my own and not that of Johns Hopkins Medicine." Or "Opinions = My own for shorter character allotment. Or Tweets are mine/not medical advice or endorsements.
- **Example of Endorsement:** All views are my own. RT is not an endorsement. Or RT≠endorsement

Common Hashtags Used in Medicine

- #Migraine
- #Diabetes
- #Lymphoma
- #ADHD
- #Depression
- #Childhoodcancer
- #HIV
- #Stroke
- #Pharma
- #PlasticSurgery
- #digitalHealth
- #visualabstracts
- For more healthcare hashtags please [click here.](#)

Other Resources

Twitter Support: <https://support.twitter.com/>

Twitter Best Practices: <https://blog.hootsuite.com/twitter-best-practices/>

Beginners Guide: <https://moz.com/beginners-guide-to-social-media/twitter>

Hopkins Medicine Social Media Hub: https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/social_media

Starter List for Making Connections

- Once you join, go to the Hopkins Medicine Social Hub mentioned above, and follow your colleagues at Hopkins that are on Twitter.
- Don't forget to follow us at [@HopkinsMedicine](#) and [Hopkins Med News](#), so we can follow you back and add you to our JHM Experts list on Twitter.