

How Health Care Professionals Can Benefit From LinkedIn

It provides a perfect opportunity to make online connections that can extend your network of peers and colleagues.

BY CARY M. SILVERMAN, MD, MBA, AND SHAMA KABANI

By now, chances are that you are familiar with LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com). According to its website, the social network for professionals boasts 161 million members worldwide as of March 2012. If you are not yet using LinkedIn, you may be missing out on a valuable resource that includes an extensive network of health care professionals. In fact, in the United States alone, 5.6 million LinkedIn users categorize themselves as working in the medical field. Worldwide, that number jumps to 10.3 million. What makes LinkedIn so valuable to health care professionals?

RECOMMENDATIONS

In the world of social media—and in the world in general—there is sometimes a lingering sense of doubt as to whether people really are who they say they are and if they are reputable and professional. Recommendations on your LinkedIn profile, whether from colleagues or patients, not only add proof to your credentials and social identity but can speak volumes about your reputation. Do not be afraid to ask for recommendations from those you have worked with. Of course, when it is appropriate, you should also leave recommendations for others. Not only is it courteous; it places your name and a link to your page on other users' profiles, extending your visibility.

NETWORKING

Social media gives users the opportunity to grow their network of connections, meet new people, and reconnect with past associates. Because LinkedIn is targeted

The image shows a screenshot of a LinkedIn profile for Cary Silverman, MD, MBA. The profile includes a header with the LinkedIn logo and navigation links (Home, Profile, Contacts, Groups, Jobs, Inbox, Companies, News, More). Below the header is a banner with the text "Are you a Doctor? - Apply to appear in the 2012-2013 Leading Physicians of the World, It's F...". The main profile section features a profile picture of Dr. Silverman, his name "Cary Silverman, MD, MBA", and his title "Medical Director, EyeCare 20/20" in the "Greater New York City Area" for "Medical Practice". The profile lists his current role as "Attending Physician at Saint Barnabas Health Care System", including "Operating Surgeon and Partner at River Drive Surgery Center" and "Attending Physician at UMDNJ". It also lists his past roles as "Ophthalmology Resident at Hahnemann University Hospital" and "Medical Intern at Monmouth Medical Center". Education includes "The George Washington University - School of Business", "University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey - New Jersey Medical School", and "Boston University". Recommendations show "13 people have recommended Cary". Connections are listed as "500+ connections". Websites include "EyeCare 20/20's main site", "The LASIK Blog", and "LASIK for the Gold". Twitter handles are "TheLASIKDoc", "LASIKfortheGold", and "LASIKtheRefs". The public profile URL is "http://www.linkedin.com/in/carysilvermanmd". At the bottom, there are buttons for "Share", "PDF", and "Print". A "Summary" section follows, stating "Medical Director of EyeCare 20/20, a 4 physician, full service eye care facility. I personally specialize in LASIK, cataract, and refractive surgery." and "Specialties: First practice in NJ to offer LASIK using the Allegretto Wave laser."

Dr. Silverman's LinkedIn profile page.

to professionals, it is the perfect opportunity to make online connections that can extend your network of peers and colleagues. By connecting with those you have worked with, you can keep up to date on the latest industry information posted by others, keep in touch with peers who could send you referrals, and position yourself as a prime contact in your industry.

LinkedIn Groups provide a forum to share information, tips, and news with groups of professionals who have similar specialties and interests. Joining and actively participating in these groups is an excellent way to contribute your knowledge and learn from others.

REACHING POTENTIAL PATIENTS

While a LinkedIn profile that lists impressive accomplishments and recommendations can help convince potential patients that you are both skilled and reputable, this usually means that patients had to have specifically searched for your profile. With LinkedIn's Service Providers Directory, however, potential patients and clients can search for professionals in a specific field, including ophthalmologists, optometrists, family physicians, physical therapists, and other specialists. Listing yourself in this directory is an excellent way to increase your reach to patients who are searching LinkedIn for a qualified practitioner in your field.

SHARING YOUR EXPERTISE

As a health care professional, your expert reputation is extremely important. With a LinkedIn profile you can put your expertise on display. Profiles are designed to resemble resumes, so you can highlight your entire educational and professional background, including any training, certifications, industry memberships, or awards you have received.

Joining LinkedIn Groups is also an avenue to share and obtain information. Another LinkedIn feature, LinkedIn Answers, allows professionals to answer user-posted questions related to their field and industry. This is another excellent method to present yourself as a helpful expert and to gain valuable exposure. ■

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