



epocrates®

Elevating HCP Engagement

**The latest behavior
trends, insights, and
strategies**

Introduction

Today's healthcare providers (HCPs) are overworked, overwhelmed, and faced with an unprecedented number of challenges. With increasing demands, ever-changing expectations, and so many competing priorities, there's a narrow window in which pharma brands can catch and hold their attention and encourage them to take action. Plus, as a digitally savvy, discerning audience, delivering messages that resonate with them isn't as simple and straightforward as it once was. To ensure effective campaigns, pharma marketers must develop new strategies that move from volume to engagement, prioritize personalization, and meet HCPs at the right time, in the right place, and with the right message.



Top Trends

01

HCPs are struggling to manage higher patient loads with more administrative tasks.

More than 60% are seeing more patients than they were 5 years ago and are up against administrative burden.^{1,2}

02

Personalization is increasingly becoming a priority.

78% of HCPs say they prefer medical reference apps that are tailored for them.¹

03

With trust, comes action.

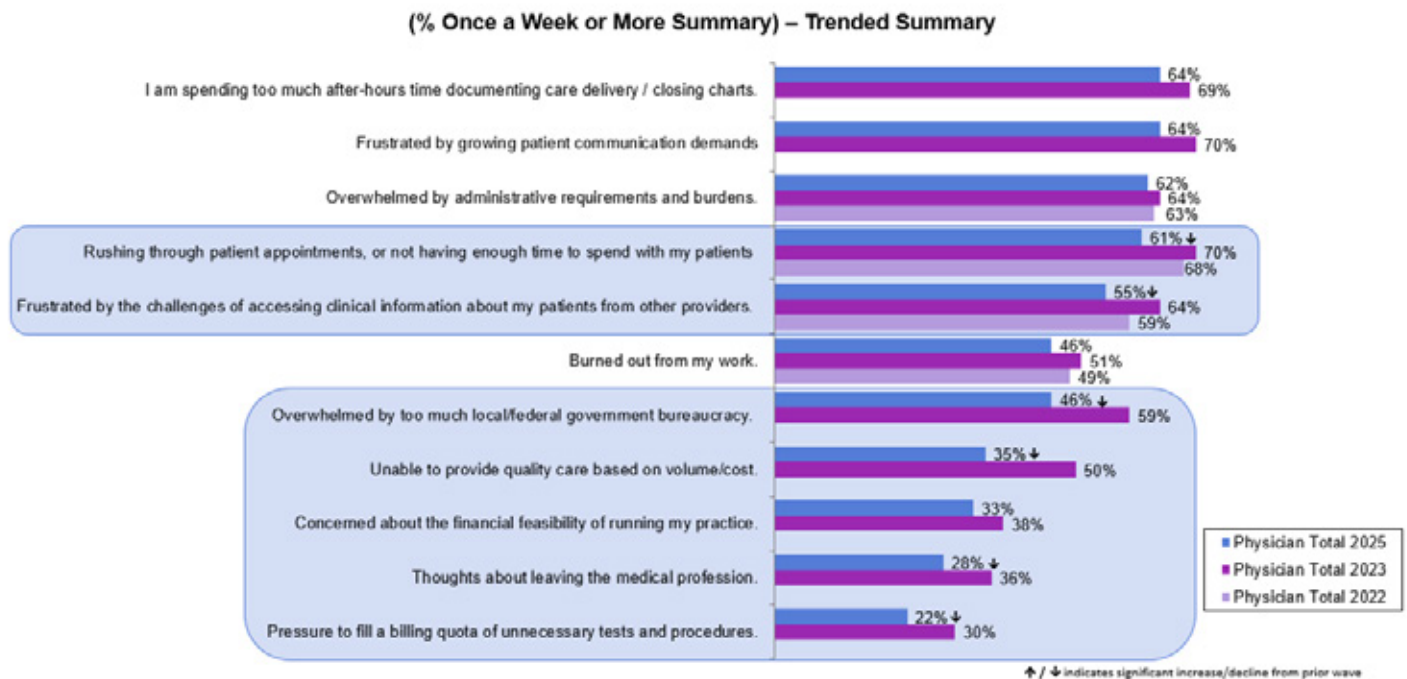
HCPs are spending time across channels, but they prioritize credible, trustworthy sources.¹



Trend #1. HCPs Are Drowning In Demands

With more patients to see, increasing patient complexity, and administrative burden, HCPs have heavy workloads that show no signs of slowing down.^{1,2} In fact, 63% say that they see more patients per day and 74% say the complexity of their caseloads has increased over the last five years.¹

Thinking about the past year, how often did you feel each of the following?



Source: 2025 Physician Sentiment Survey of 1,001 physicians nationwide, commissioned by athenahealth and fielded by Harris Poll, Jan. 2025.

There are also external forces that threaten their time and attention, and impact how they deliver care, interact with patients, and manage their roles. For example, healthcare policy, regulatory compliance, payer coverage, the patient experience, private equity and healthcare consolidation, and learning and adapting to new technologies are among the many factors influencing their roles.³

70%
of medical students often have
feelings of burnout compared to
60%
of physicians and residents.⁶

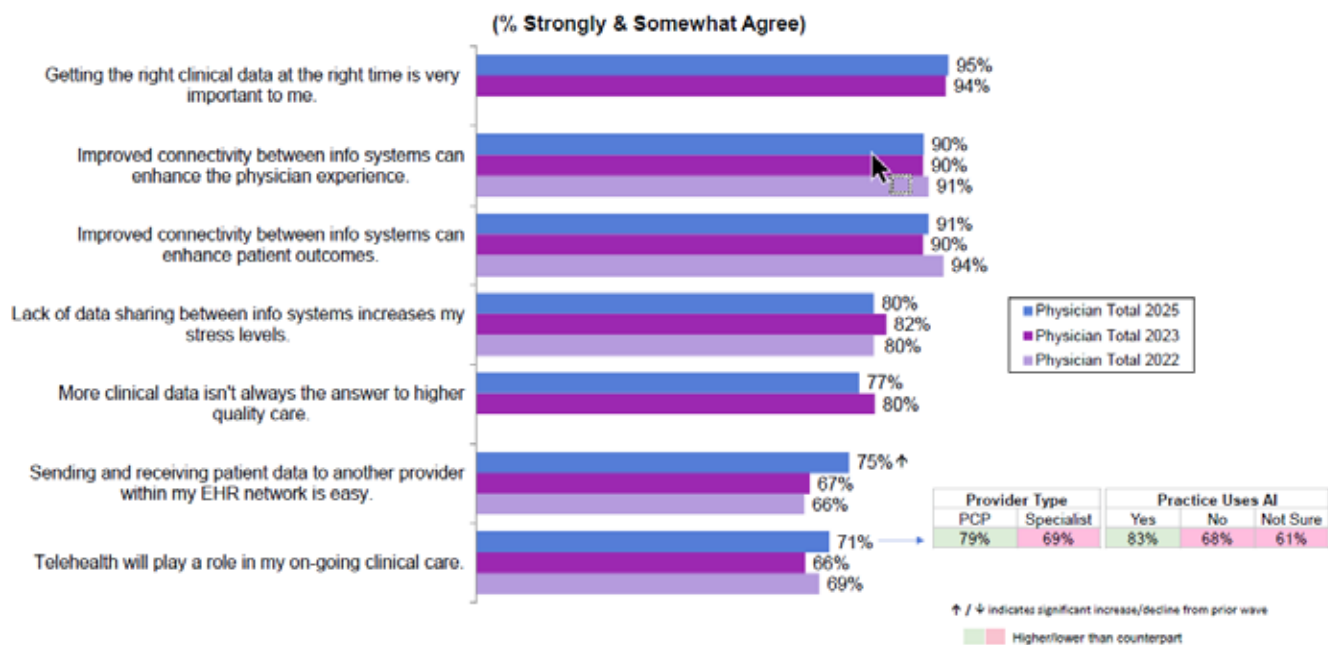
Unsurprisingly, the lines between work and life continue to blur. In fact, 45% say they have more trouble balancing work and their personal lives and many are sacrificing personal and family time in the process.^{1,4} Plus, more than one-third of physicians who reported that work had at least a moderate impact on their personal relationships were more than three times more likely to experience burnout.⁵

How to Reach Them

Since HCPs have a limited amount of time and bandwidth to stay up-to-date on the latest clinical information and products, marketing efforts must meet them with a relevant message and within their existing workflows—whether that’s at the point of care or outside of their typical work hours.

95%
of physicians said that getting the right clinical data at the right time is very important to them.²

To what extent do you disagree or agree with each of the following statements about your current practice or organization?



Source: 2025 Physician Sentiment Survey of 1,001 physicians nationwide, commissioned by athenahealth and fielded by Harris Poll, Jan. 2025.

Trend #2: Personalization Is the New Baseline

Baby Boomers, Gen X, Millennials, and Gen Z all represent today's HCPs, and each has their own unique priorities and preferred channels where they access information—making one-size-fits-all marketing a thing of the past.

As a population who grew up during a time of rapid digital transformation, Gen Z, in particular, embraces and is adept at using new technologies such as AI. They spend more time on their phones than other generations, prefer streaming media and gaming, and demand authenticity in advertising.^{7,8}

86%

**of Gen Z agree that technology
is essential to their lives⁸**

Although the rate of adoption and use of technology can vary between generations, all HCPs are digitally proficient—on mobile, engaging on social media, and consuming content in digital formats.⁹ Plus, with one-third of HCPs who consider themselves digital natives, digital engagement has increased among this audience.^{9,11}

There's no such thing as a non-digital person anymore—even people in their 80s are doing something [online],

*—Vaishali Mokashi, head of
HCP strategy at Initiative.¹¹*

Mobile medical reference apps are one of the primary channels HCPs use to look up clinical information and support prescribing decisions, and 78% say they prefer those that are specifically designed for them.¹

With non-linear journeys, multiple channels vying for their time and attention, and marketing messages at every turn, the demand for personalization couldn't be greater.¹⁰ Plus, while running a large volume of ads may have been effective in the past, the relationship between HCPs and brands will increasingly focus on the value of engagement rather than volume alone to drive campaign success.¹¹

How to Reach Them

Pharma marketers must adapt their strategies from simply serving up a volume of ads to running effective campaigns that truly engage their audiences with the right message, at the right time, and in the right place. Personalized campaigns and messaging in channels that already have high HCP engagement is an effective way for brands to capture their attention, encourage them to take action, and stand out from the competition.



Trend #3: Trust Is Redefining the Journey and Driving Action

HCPs are increasingly using multiple channels and content types to stay informed, including articles, videos, and interactive content.¹² While HCPs spend time reading the latest clinical news, at the end of the day, they're people too, and like scrolling through social media.¹³ In fact, among HCPs who use social media, more than 44% use it for continuing professional development certified activities.¹⁴

Regardless of the channel, however, trust trumps everything. HCPs are looking to access relevant, evidence-based information from credible sources to make prescribing decisions. While scientific publications are a primary source of information, HCP-only digital networks are increasingly becoming a preferred channel. More than 58% of HCPs are using these platforms for regular updates, as a result of the peer-reviewed content these platforms provide.¹⁵

While trustworthiness is a priority, the messages must also stick, which often isn't the case. When asked about the digital ads they see from pharma brands, only 32% of respondents say the information is relevant to them, according to CMI.¹⁶

Receiving irrelevant information can lead to a lower level of trust and "train" HCPs to move quickly past pharmaceutical messaging, instead of absorbing it. Plus, although pharmaceutical reps are still relevant, their roles have evolved and more of their interactions with HCPs are in virtual environments. Therefore, digital, omnichannel strategies can lay the groundwork for sales by educating and engaging physicians, and amplifying face-to-face interactions whether they be virtually or IRL.

How to Reach Them

Pharma marketers must recognize that HCPs are an audience that is increasingly spending their time in multiple digital channels and demanding the latest clinical information, quick, actionable insights delivered through credible, trustworthy sources, and effortless experiences. As a result, they must develop strategies that meet HCPs where they are and in channels where they frequently engage.

Marketing efforts should be designed in a way that takes HCPs on a content journey across channels, focusing on storytelling and using multiple tactics to reach, capture attention, and drive engagement. An interactive quiz, for example, can identify the target audience, gauge their knowledge of a topic, debunk myths, arm the sales reps with information, and reinforce messaging.



Conclusion

As pharma marketers look ahead, understanding these trends and insights and using them to inform their media strategies will be critical to their success.

Effectively reaching and engaging HCPs requires prioritizing content journeys, personalization, and the right message at the right time and in the right channel. When identifying partners, look for those that use behavior data to target HCPs, engage them at the point of care, offer multiple tactics, and demonstrate what effective engagement looks like on their platform.

About epocrates

epocrates, an athenahealth company, is the leading clinical decision support platform trusted by more than one million U.S. healthcare professionals. With concise, evidence-based content and intuitive tools, we help clinicians cut through complexity and make confident decisions at the point of care. Our platform also offers opportunities for reaching clinicians through digital advertising.



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