

Social media for physiotherapists



Gerard Greene MSc (Manip Physio)
Lead Clinician, Harborne
Physiotherapy and
Acupuncture Clinic



Lucy Cocker BSc Physio
Physiotherapist, Derby
Hospitals NHS FT
and Touch Therapy

Social media is a phenomenon of our time. While most physiotherapy practices will, by now, have their own websites, the popularity of Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn have changed the way we communicate with one another and with the public in general.



Getting started

Does your clinic have a website?

If the answer to this question is “no”, then an easier starting point for you may be to set up a Facebook page for your clinic while you plan your website. A Facebook page will get you visible online and on social media immediately.

If, however, you already have a website for your clinic, you may wish to consider the following:

- Does your website truly reflect how vibrant your clinic is?
- When did you last update your website? How often do you update it?
- How interactive is your website for clients?
- Is your site compatible with tablets and mobile devices? Check it out now on your phone or tablet.
- Is it easy for potential clients to find your website on Google? Google yourself now and find out.
- Who is hosting your site and who controls your website, i.e. web designer and when is the domain name renewal date? Find out the answers to these questions as they are important as your domain name will need to be renewed periodically.

Before even contemplating creating a social media presence, it should be remembered that the first point of contact for many people is your website and it is worth putting some thought into optimising your online visibility to ensure you can respond positively to the points above. Regularly uploading new content, and simple additions such as photographs of your staff, images of events you may have worked at, reviews, clinic news, and a local resources page, can all contribute to keeping your site fresh and interesting.

Social media options

Most will be familiar with the words Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. However, for those for whom the function of these sites remains a mystery, here is a quick guide to each; and for those who are regular FBers and Tweeters, we have added a couple of social media options you may not yet be familiar with.



Facebook

Developing a Facebook Business page can enable you to interact with existing clients and their friends, and reach new active client groups. Clients who are on Facebook can be encouraged to post feedback about their experience on your clinic page and the “tagging” option enables the name of your clinic to be visible to their wider group of Facebook friends. Prior to developing a business Facebook page you will need a personal one first.

Some of the key client groups accessible on Facebook include:

- local fitness and leisure organisations
- groups for parents such as NCT and Motivated Mums
- athletics, cycling, running clubs, etc.
- other health professionals such as chiropractors and acupuncturists
- fitness professionals, personal trainers, etc.
- multi-professional and international clinical interest groups.

If you are already on Facebook, see if there are any local client groups you can like or join.



LinkedIn

This medium is a nice, introductory step into social media; it is completely focused on the professional profile of its users. Creating a profile is straightforward and there is a significant LinkedIn physiotherapy / healthcare community already established that includes the likes of Physio First and MACP.

Having a LinkedIn profile will raise your visibility on Google and enable networking with existing and potential clients, and local and national businesses, all of whom can view your profile in advance of making contact. It is an excellent source for articles and discussions on business development, innovation, creativity, and can be a very useful tool to recruit new staff.

Physio First have a great forum on LinkedIn that members can join and interact with fellow members. To find the Physio First forum use the LinkedIn search function.

If you are already registered with LinkedIn, access my, and Lucy's, profiles and find other physios and healthcare professionals to network with.



Twitter

A user name on Twitter simply starts with @, i.e. @gerardgreenephy, or @physiotalk, while hashtag (#) indicates a specific topic. Try #physiofirst or #pelvicmafia and see what results you get.

Specialist areas of physiotherapy practice are well represented on Twitter and this medium can be used by the private practitioner to develop their business profile. A Twitter feed updates continuously and automatically, so linking it to your clinic website can enable you to interact effectively with clients, local businesses, local sports clubs, golf clubs, etc.

With this type of continuous updating on your website, investing in a search engine optimisation (SEO) programme will have the added benefit of ensuring that your website is easily accessible in the Google search engine.

A great way to get started on Twitter is through "physiotalk" <http://physiotalk.co.uk> (see below for further information).

Physiotalk

Having been set up in December 2013, Physiotalk is possibly the most significant, recent social media development for the physiotherapist as its aim is to facilitate discussion about

physiotherapy evidence and practice through frequent Twitter chats. Members share ideas and experiences and, if you are new to Twitter, or already have a Twitter account but are still trying to work out how to "drive" it, Physiotalk is a place to learn, share and network with other physiotherapists.

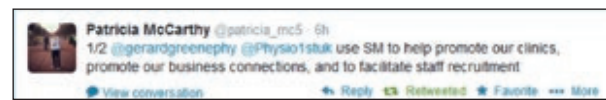


Google+

Google+ is Google's own social media network for businesses. Having a vibrant and customised Google+ page makes your business more visible on Google and more appealing to potential new clients. It is relatively easy to set up and has become a vital platform for businesses to engage with.

With Google+ you can create a unique profile for your clinic that is easy to update and can include staff details, photos, videos, interests and links. The platform allows you to connect to other businesses / individuals through a network circle and offers tailored marketing to your relevant audiences. A powerful aspect of Google+ is that clients can review your clinic and post these reviews online.

If your clinic has a website, there will be a page on Google+ even if you haven't done anything with it. You may even have some reviews! Look at other physio clinics to see what they have done with their pages.



Blogs

Although not a specific social media site, a blog (or web log) is a method of discussing topics through your own posts, traditionally via a website, but more recently on Twitter via microblogging. Most blogs allow visitors to leave comments which enable the owner of the blog (or blogger) to build a social relationship with their readers.

In the main, blogs provide commentary on a particular subject, but they can also take the form of personal online diaries, or as online brand advertising of a particular individual or company.

If blogging appeals to you, here are some key sites to get you started:

<http://thesportsphysio.wordpress.com>

<http://www.running-physio.com>

<http://macpblog.wordpress.com>

<http://physiotherapygraduate.co.uk>

<http://pelvicguru.com>

Check out one of the blogs, it may change your life and how you view CPD.



Podcasts

Again, not strictly a social media site, podcasts are files that can be downloaded from the internet, or streamed online, and enable the sharing of information that can be accessed in an audio / visual format.

Some of the key podcast sites include:

Physio edge podcasts

BJSM podcasts

Physio Matters podcasts.

Google a podcast and share it with your colleagues.

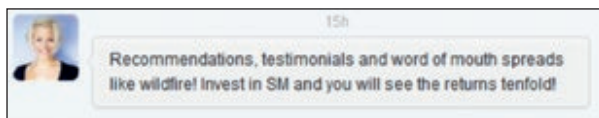
The benefits of social media

With technology becoming more prevalent in our daily lives, and communication increasingly carried out through social media, it is obvious that it is an important tool for the future success of our businesses, clinically and financially.

A presence on one or more of the social media platforms described above offers:

- interaction and networking opportunities with key client groups
- powerful interactive marketing openings
- the chance to generate a vibrant public profile for your business
- the ability to collect valuable client reviews and feedback
- a strong commercial and clinical network of peer groups
- access to invaluable CPD resources.

Ultimately, the main advantage of social media is the support network it offers to clinicians who wish to discuss new or specialist approaches to practice, confer on challenging clinical cases, develop expertise, and promote innovative and creative physiotherapy.



How do I get started?

As discussed earlier, the first step is to spend some time addressing your website, or building one if you don't already have one. Once you are happy that this satisfactorily represents you and your clinic, you will need to:

- decide who will operate and manage your social media. You? A colleague? An external facilitator?
- create your own LinkedIn profile
- explore some CPD discussions and resources on Twitter and Facebook
- develop your own Facebook business page and Twitter feed and integrate them into your website.

If you are new to the concept of social media, take small steps and focus on investing your time in just one platform to begin with.

About the authors

Gerard Greene is a Physio First member who works in private practice in Birmingham in addition to running an education company and lecturing in HEd. He has developed several significant physio related social media platforms and has presented widely on this topic in the UK and Ireland. He uses social media heavily in his education company and clinic. Gerard also delivers seminars on using social media effectively for health related businesses and is a physiotherapy lecturer at Coventry University.

Lucy Cocker is a recent physio graduate who is a well-known physio-blogger and has developed several professional and business related social media platforms. Working in the NHS and private practice she has first-hand experience of using social media to develop her own business and delivers training to healthcare clinics on how to develop their social media presence. Lucy has delivered numerous presentations on social media.

Tweet and FB us, to let us know how you are getting on – you are not alone out there.

Address for correspondence

Gerard Greene

[@gerardgreenephy](https://twitter.com/gerardgreenephy) [f](https://www.facebook.com/harbornePhysio) harborne Physio

gerard@greenephysio.co.uk

www.harbornephysio.co.uk

Lucy Cocker

[@LCphysio](https://twitter.com/LCphysio) [f](https://www.facebook.com/In-Touch-Therapy) In-Touch-Therapy

www.intouchtherapy.co.uk