

## **From Posts to Patients: The Influence of Social Media Content on Hand Surgeon Ratings**

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### **INTRODUCTION:**

Physician rating websites (PRWs) and social media platforms are increasingly important role in how patients choose healthcare providers. While prior research has linked social media presence to physician ratings, the impact of specific platforms and content strategies remains poorly defined. This study evaluates the relationship between social media engagement and PRW scores among fellowship-trained hand surgeons, with a focus on platform-specific use and content type.

### **METHODS:**

A cross-sectional study was conducted using American Association for Hand Surgery (AAHS) directory to identify fellowship training hand surgeons. Demographic data, training background, and PRW scores from Google Reviews, Healthgrades, and Vitals were collected. Social media activity was assessed across Facebook, Instagram, Twitter/X, LinkedIn, including followers, posting frequency, and content type (categorized as professional vs. personal). Univariate and multivariate regressions were performed to determine associations between social media variables and PRW scores.

### **RESULTS:**

Of 688 eligible hand surgeons, 376 (54.7%) maintained an active presence on at least one social media platform. LinkedIn (49.9%) was the most commonly used followed by Instagram (8.2%). Instagram users had a median of 768 followers and posted predominantly professional content (60%). Younger surgeons (aged 30–49) had significantly higher PRW scores across all platforms ( $p < .001$ ). Instagram use was independently associated with higher Healthgrades ( $\beta = 0.296$ ,  $p = .006$ ) and Vitals ( $\beta = 0.254$ ,  $p = .030$ ) scores. A greater proportion of professional posts correlated positively with ratings, whereas personal content was associated with lower scores ( $p = .036$ ).

### **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION:**

Although general social media presence did not predict improved physician ratings, targeted Instagram use particularly with professional content strategy- was independently associated with higher PRW scores. These findings suggest that curated, professional social media engagement may enhance a surgeon's online reputation and increase patient engagement in the digital era.