



An Interview with Letizia Affinito; Adjunct Professor from St. John's University; Leading Author; and CEO & Founder of Brandnew MC

Leading up to the 8th annual conference on Social Media in the Pharmaceutical Industry, the CEO and Founder of Marketing Communications company, Brandnew MC, was asked a few questions about effective engagement and current social media trends within the pharmaceutical sector.

Author of the upcoming book "Socialize Your Patient Engagement Strategy", Letizia has a PhD in Management and teaches as Adjunct Professor at leading International Universities and Business Schools.

With over 20 years' experience, Letizia Affinito was responsible for launching Web in Salute, the first online research project in Italy exploring the "Effects of Online Health Information". She has previously worked as product manager for Merck Sharp & Dohme, and at global biotech company, Serono, where she was responsible for marketing and sales activities in the Endocrinology and Metabolism Business Unit. In her current role, she advises several multinational companies and organizations on online/offline communication strategy matters.



Lead your online conversation by receiving strategic guidance from Letizia at Social Media in the Pharmaceutical Industry 2016, as she provides unique new insights into creating value through digital conversation and strengthening platforms to lead communities in open engagement. Follow the conversation at #pharmasocialmedia

Q: Speaking the right language is very much an art, as it is about transparency and business growth: What creative approaches are driving healthcare marketing?

A. Apps, videos, and storytelling are "driving" healthcare marketing. Nevertheless, it is still too long the road toward a value creation approach truly patient-centred able to drive tangible healthcare outcomes.

Q: SMI: What aspects of the conference are you most looking forward to?

A. To confront with managers and colleagues about what works for them and what doesn't. I hope we can have a constructive exchange of ideas that hopefully will help make patient-centered digital communication a reality.

Q: SMI: What are some of the winning factors in keeping consumers engaged? What other initiatives would you like to see to help foster more consumers and HCP's interacting online?

To keep consumers engaged organizations will need to be very good at providing them with content and tools which are relevant for them (not for the organization or for HCP or physicians alone).

According to a McKinsey survey of thousands of patients in Germany, Singapore, and the United Kingdom, the adoption of digital healthcare services remains low because existing services are either low quality or not meeting patients' needs. Health systems, payers, and providers often think they need to be innovative when designing their digital-service offerings. But the core features patients expect from their health system are surprisingly ordinary: efficiency, better access to information, integration with other channels, and the availability of a real person if the digital service doesn't give them what they need. Highly innovative services, better apps, and more social media are far less important to most patients. Surprisingly, across the globe, most people want the same thing: assistance with routine tasks and navigating the often-complex healthcare system. In Germany, Singapore, and the United Kingdom UK, for example—three very different countries with three very different health systems—patients most often cite “finding and scheduling physician appointments” as the service with which they need assistance. To engage effectively on social media, defence experts must first listen to their audience, then connect and engage, which is all easily done via social media.

Q: Why is regulation still a struggle for going digital?

A. Regulations, once used to assess the quality, safety and efficacy of prescribed medicine are going through the challenging process of adapting to new realities as disruptive technologies and the issues related to their use mostly with regard to patient privacy and safety. Regulators must invest in new capability to meet new expectations, such as assessing information governance and cyber security, which will gain increasing prominence in the light of increasing amount of data.

Let's take, for example, the prototype “smart” contact lens which Calico, Google's biotechnology company, unveiled earlier in 2014 to monitor blood glucose levels contained in human tears. The Smart Contact Lens Project debuted a potential, although long-term, solution for effective blood glucose control in people with diabetes. This type of disruptive technology will require significant changes to existing clinical trial and marketing authorization assessments. For example, regulators will need to consider the control frameworks needed to prevent a lethal dosage as the algorithm learns about a new patient. They will need to approve dosage thresholds rather than explicit dosages, and new analytic competencies will be required to assess study outcomes and MA submissions. Same is happening with regard to the use of medical apps as disease management tools.

Q: What new developments do you envision for 2016?

A. For 2016 I envision an increase in the number of digital health programs with a decrease in the development of digital apps as a consequence of both increased regulation and better focus on their real adoption rate. I further trust in an increase in both technological partnerships and strategic partnerships between HCPs and Pharma/Biomedical companies and/or public-private. Finally, I hope organizations stop focusing on the new innovations and start focusing on managing change to use the innovation already available at its best.

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