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## EUROPEANS MORE LIKELY TO TRUST SOCIAL MEDIA WITH THEIR HEALTH, STUDY FINDS

*More Than 1,000 Doctors and Patients Queried in Digitas Health Study*

*Social Media Plays Important Role in Shaping Treatment, and Doctors Expect Pharma to be a Resource*

LONDON – 25 March, 2010 – Research released today by Digitas Health has found startling contrasts in the adoption of social-media technologies for health purposes between European countries and the US. Among many insights, it found that Europeans are more likely than Americans to trust health-related social media information, and European physicians welcome pharma services for their practices more than twice as much as their US counterparts.

The research, which involved surveying more than 1,000 healthcare professionals and consumers throughout Europe and the US about their use of social media, was commissioned by Digitas Health and conducted by Kantar Health. The findings were then analyzed by Digitas Health, a leading healthcare marketing agency with a growing presence in Europe.

The following findings were reported:

- Sixty-seven percent of European consumers say they trust the information they find in social-media venues versus only 45% of American consumers.
- Fifty-two percent of European physicians believe that healthcare professionals should participate in discussions in patient forums and social networks, compared to only 41% of US physicians. Similarly, 41% of European physicians believe that social media will play an increasingly important role in shaping their patient management and treatment, versus only 23% of US physicians.
- Half of European physicians believe that pharmaceutical companies can and should offer digital services that can be integrated into their local primary and secondary care services, compared to only a quarter of US physicians.
- Two-thirds of doctors and 32% of all patients surveyed expect their online communication on health-related matters to increase over the next 18 months.
- Over 40% of physicians in Europe believe that social media will play an increasingly important role in shaping their patient management and treatment, and 70% see social media playing an increasingly important role in shaping patients' opinions about their medication and condition.

“One key contrast illuminated by the study data is the much greater desire by European consumers for physician participation in social-media venues, compared to US consumers, who welcome physician participation only in some conditions and some social-media venues. Facilitating this interchange represents a clear opportunity for European healthcare marketers,” said Bruce Grant, SVP business strategy at Digitas Health and lead analyst of the study's findings.

“While the Internet has been changing the nature of the patient/physician relationship for years, social media is starting to play an interesting role in the delivery of emotional support, with people suffering chronic and sometimes stigmatized conditions,” said June Dawson, managing director of Digitas Health in London. “By enabling people to share experiences and ask and get those honest answers to questions about their condition, social media is removing much of the mystery behind medical decisions and is a powerful source in helping to make the industry more democratic and humane for patients.”

The concern for patients feeling isolated by their condition, particularly psychiatric illnesses and degenerative neurological disease, was highlighted by almost all physicians. Overall, two-fifths of chronic illness sufferers perceive online and/or in-person support groups to provide a valuable service (much higher in Spain). The majority of physicians favoured in-person (89%) over online (74%). Spanish culture was clearly evident in conversations about support groups, with an overwhelming 94%

acknowledging the value of in-person support groups and 83% valuing the power of online support groups. UK General Practitioners (GPs) were very even handed, 91% registering the value of online support groups and 90% for in-person support.

Additionally, the research revealed that social media is also being used by GPs to help identify resources for patients. Patient health forums and bulletin boards are chosen as information services by 66% of physicians, demonstrating the increasing role of online communities and groups of like-minded individuals. More traditional resources continue, with 73% of physicians confirming their use of pharmaceutical company websites but the diversification of reference points is clear.

In Europe, reference web pages are the most important type of resource for consumers looking for health information. Wikipedia, followed by the French physicians' website Doctissimo, are the two websites most likely to be recommended to others, while WebMD® and the Mayo Clinic online resources are most important for US consumers. The UK's NHS Direct ranked 6th across Europe.

Kantar Health is a leading healthcare-focused global consultancy, specializing in portfolio optimization, market access, safety and outcomes, and brand and customer insights.

The full study is available by contacting June Dawson at [june.dawson@digitashealth.com](mailto:june.dawson@digitashealth.com).

### **About Digitas Health**

Counting as clients many of the world's leading pharmaceutical, bioscience, and medical device companies, Digitas Health is a next-generation marketing agency that helps build healthcare brands that patients, caregivers, and healthcare professionals feel confident turning to and recommending when they are sick, in need, or helping others. With offices in Philadelphia, New York, Boston and London, Digitas Health is a unit of Digitas, leading global digital marketing and media agency and a member of the Paris-based Publicis Groupe S.A. (Euronext Paris: FR0000130577), the world's third largest communications group, second largest media counsel and buying group, and a global leader in digital and healthcare communications.

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