

7 Steps for Managing Adverse Events in Social Media



1 START SMALL Focus on What's Required

When beginning social media monitoring, start with the requirements – owned properties. Pharmaceutical organizations are required to monitor social media properties that they own or over which they have control or influence (e.g. their own websites, Facebook Pages, Twitter accounts, smartphone applications, sponsored blogs, etc.) for adverse events (AEs).

Start here. Test your processes and gain experience. As business objectives expand and comfort level with social media increases, consider branching out beyond owned properties to monitor the broad social media space for adverse event detection, trend identification and product quality feedback.

2 DEFINE CLEAR SCOPE & OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

Establish Clear Objectives: It's important to set clear expectations around what the social monitoring initiative is looking for. Is the goal to look expressly for adverse events or to simply be prepared to evaluate and process AEs if they are identified during other monitoring activities?

Expand Vocabulary: The vernacular used in social media has nuance that distinguishes it from traditional channels. When identifying terms and categories that define an adverse event in social media, consider the lexicon used online. Consumers and patients speak differently online than they would on the phone or in an email – definitions for drugs, conditions and side effects need to be expanded to include layman's terms.



3 COMBINE TECHNOLOGY WITH TRAINED STAFF

The volume of data gathered from social media can be overwhelming. Gain the most value from this data by utilizing a combination of social media technology and trained staff. Social Media technology can be used to extract relevant conversations, manage volume, prioritize and queue critical posts, and deliver social reporting. Trained Social Media Specialists should be utilized to monitor, apply meaningful analysis, and identify and escalate critical issues.



4 IMPLEMENT SEAMLESS MODERATION PROCESSES

Leverage your organization's existing pharmacovigilance (PV) processes and experience to plan and manage adverse events identified through social channels. While it may be tempting to separate or wall off social media data and safety information, a best practice is to bring these worlds together.

Once potential AEs are identified through social channels, they should be securely triaged to existing PV processes. This delivers consistency across channels, and allows you to align with regulatory requirements. Take advantage of quality auditing, reconciliation and training processes already in place. Adjust procedures where required to accommodate for the nuances of social channels.



5 PREPARE FOR SCALABILITY

AE volume in social media can be unpredictable. Whether you are monitoring your owned social properties or expanding to the broader social universe – be prepared to handle spikes in AE volume. Variations in AE mentions can fluctuate dramatically based on marketing campaigns, sponsored content, consumer backlash, etc. Be prepared with clearly-defined processes and well-trained staff to manage volume increases.



6 LEVERAGE INSIGHTS

Social media serves as a perpetual focus group and a constant source of insights. You can utilize targeted social listening projects to reveal relevant trends from AEs and PQCs. For example, patient concerns, product feedback, and early warning alerts can surface during monitoring efforts.



7 RESPOND TO ADVERSE EVENTS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

When to Respond: Once a potential AE is identified in social media, some organizations take the additional step to respond to the post to obtain additional information. A public initial response to a consumer's post is acceptable in many cases. Reply directly to the original post with options to continue the conversation through a private channel to gather additional details and confidentially answer questions.

Timely Response: Response expectations on social platforms are high, as many of today's consumers expect a response within a matter of hours. It's important to set response time guidelines to appropriately service communities on social platforms.

Follow Social Media Best Practices: All social media interactions should follow some standard interaction best practices while incorporating a human voice-of-the-brand. For example, begin with a personalized greeting, predetermine rules of engagement specific to who handles which kinds of posts, # of response attempts, when to avoid response, and how to handle platforms with character limitations.

