

## Inspiring Older Patients to Seek Online Communities: How the National Osteoporosis Foundation Engages Over 19,000 Middle-Aged and Senior Women and Men

David Sheon | October 2, 2014

When it comes to talking about health, online communities are turning shades of gray.

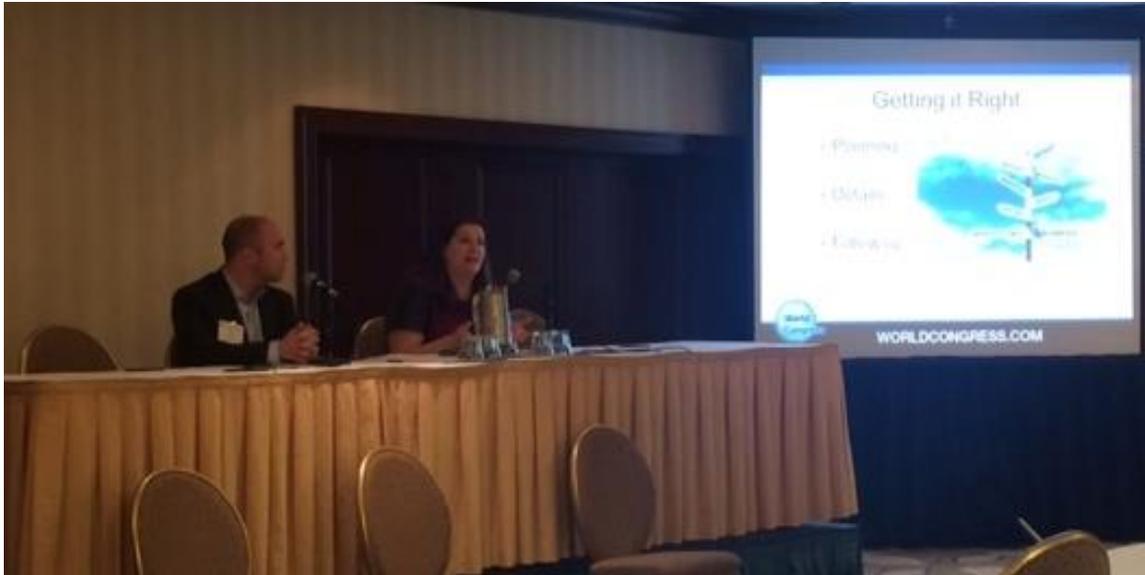
Websites hosting online patient communities, such as Inspire.com, are bringing seniors together on a common platform where they can learn about their condition from other patients in similar situations. Inspire offers discussion forums where patients can communicate to fulfill scientific, emotional, and practical needs regarding their medical conditions.



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What sets Inspire apart from other online disease communities is the partnerships that it creates with condition-specific patient advocacy groups, including the National Osteoporosis Foundation (NOF), which works with Inspire to offer credible information and to deliver timely research and news of interest to the community of osteoporosis patients.

NOF is the nation's only health organization dedicated specifically to promoting bone health. NOF takes a strong stance on bringing awareness to the fact that [one in two women, and one in four men over the age of 50 will have an osteoporotic fracture](#). NOF informs the patient community and key opinion leaders that fractures caused without blunt force, such as the result of a car accident, typically are the result of low bone density. NOF hopes to turn the tide of bone fractures from osteoporosis by raising awareness of prevention and treatment options.



Brian Loew and Claire Gill at the 2014 Patient Centricity and Advocacy Summit

In their September 29<sup>th</sup> presentation at the World Congress Summit on Patient Centricity and Advocacy, Alexandria, Virginia, Brian Loew, CEO of Inspire, and Claire Gill, Senior Director of Marketing and Consumer and Corporate Outreach of NOF spoke of the successes that have come from their partnership, noting the dynamic growth of the osteoporosis community on Inspire.com. The community has over 19,000 members, with about 500 new users every month. Posted surveys and hot topics drive engagement.

“We check everyday online, answer questions, [and] send information,” said Ms. Gill. “We’ve never had a need to stimulate conversations. There’s a robust dialogue on every imaginable topic.”

Osteoporosis patients are holding the majority of these conversations, with some contribution coming from family members and caregivers. Because of the age of appearance of most bone-related diseases, these patients are usually over the age of 55.

According to Loew, “the online tax of usability for elderly people is either gone or dramatically diminished.”

“We know the age of new users on Facebook is older, and the growth of the online community is further proof that older users are here to stay,” said Gill.

Gill related her experience with this community’s adaptability to the Internet when NOF eliminated the option to immediately speak to an operator by telephone. Now, upon calling NOF, patients are directed to the website. After the change was implemented, the site’s page views jumped from 60,000 to 100,000 per month, according to Gill. Callers could leave a message if they prefer, and would later be contacted. Instead, many chose to go online.

The partnership between Inspire and NOF shows that middle-aged and senior patients are turning in record numbers to online communities to manage their health. Does this surprise you? Would you recommend Inspire to a patient with osteoporosis that you know?

To read this post on RWHC blog, [click here](#).