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## Pre-Rounds

# Kevin, MD: A Physician's Perspective on Medical News

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Every morning before seeing his patients, internist Kevin Pho, MD, surfs the Web for medical news. He looks for items relevant to him, such as new reimbursement rules, malpractice cases or tort reform, and drug developments. Then he posts a new entry on his Web-log, providing links to these stories for his many readers to find. He often includes a pithy headline and a quote from the article, sometimes adding a thought of his own. He adds more links at lunchtime and again after the workday is over, devoting still extra time to blogging on red-letter days like when Merck withdrew the drug *Vioxx*.

"I do take an interest in the various hot-topic medical issues, since they directly impact me as a physician," Dr. Pho said. "They are obviously controversial, and people on both sides of the fence are quite passionate in their views. The blog serves as a catalyst and outlet for their (sometimes vicious) debate."

Kevin Pho, MD, hosts  
[Grand Rounds](#)  
January 24, 2006  
At [Kevin, MD](#)

Indeed, the comments on Dr. Pho's blog can be as vital as his topical links. Lawyers, physicians, insurers, patients, and others are driven to voice their opinions on the news. Since Dr. Pho generally doesn't rant about the stories himself, readers take it upon themselves to agree or disagree, and they do so with vigor. Dr. Pho doesn't actively moderate the comments, so readers usually get differing viewpoints from many sides of a story, and they are able to absorb some of the passion behind these varied beliefs.

Dr. Pho has his own perspective on the news, of course, but he thinks his blog serves as more than just a platform for his own opinions.

"Because I'm in primary care, I'm attuned to the various challenges facing the future of generalist medicine," he said. "Already, there are serious questions about job satisfaction, reimbursement, and the overall viability of primary care in the United States -- and personally, I am not encouraged about the future. As we move forward and face these challenges, my blog can give a more accurate voice from the physicians' perspective."

Although his site is widely known in the medical blogosphere, Dr. Pho's online activities have also crossed over into the real world, even affecting his practice.

"Kevin, MD was featured as a [front-page story in my local paper](#), so my colleagues know about my blogging -- although many of them are indifferent to the blog in general," he said. "Some of my patients are aware of it, and we discuss it during patient visits. Some patients have even found me via the blog and switched to me as their primary care physician. There seems to be a demand for physicians who understand the Internet's role in patient health information today."

In addition to his blog, Dr. Pho runs an online [medical answer service](#), answering patient queries for a nominal fee. He

recently stopped participating in another blog for patients, partly due to time constraints and partly because he felt he didn't have sufficient control over the advertising. On his own blog, he screens any ads that appear on the site, although he admits he's not sure what he would say if a drug company approached him as a potential advertiser (a question many medical bloggers ponder as their writing attracts increasing attention).

One thing is clear to Dr. Pho: His Internet efforts take a back seat to the care of his patients. It is easy to see, however, how both goals are intertwined, especially if his site can help patients and promote a better understanding of the perspectives and struggles in the healthcare world.

On January 24, 2006, Kevin, MD hosts Grand Rounds, a weekly compilation of the best posts from other online medical writers. This special post attracts thousands of readers from all parts of the medical world. It has become a showcase for quality medical writing, and it serves as a useful introduction to the world of medical blogging. Follow the link to [Grand Rounds](#) (the link will go "live" on January 24) to find out more.

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Disclosure: Nicholas Genes, MD, PhD, has disclosed no relevant financial relationships.

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