

## Better, Faster, Physician Research

By: Jim Bryson  
Marketing Health Services



### Key Takeaways

- Recruiting physicians for health care-related research studies is a difficult and time-consuming challenge.
- The threaded bulletin platform technique allows physicians to participate at their convenience and on their smartphone or computer. The live video streaming technique uses a webcam to make focus groups easier on both physicians and moderators.
- “The convenience of both of these methodologies results in significantly higher satisfaction rates for the respondent physicians, making recruiting easier and less expensive.”

Because of rapid changes in the health care industry, recruiting physicians for health-related research studies is a challenge, and the costs are increasing dramatically. Yet many marketers and researchers still insist that these prized opinion leaders travel to a focus group facility and gather around a table to provide input for research studies. This practice is inconvenient for the physician and, therefore, difficult and expensive for the marketer. It's time for a new normal.

Today, technology penetration has advanced so that marketers and researchers now can reach busy physicians at times and places that are convenient for the physician. Also, this technology makes participation easy and more enjoyable. Physicians can share their opinions and interact with colleagues without trekking to a central location that is more convenient for researchers than doctors.

Two relatively new methodologies have been successful in helping health care research work better for everyone:

**1. The threaded bulletin board platform.** This allows physicians to participate in a group discussion at any time or place that is

convenient for them. As an adaptation of online forum technology, in which a person posts a question or comment and others reply at their leisure, this platform gives a moderator the opportunity to ask questions so that participants can respond to the moderator and to one another. Physicians don't need to make an appointment or travel—they can take part when and where they want on any device that they want.

A discussion run as a peer group inspires interest and engagement. Physicians, particularly specialists, often have limited opportunities to interact with colleagues, so

when a discussion is run as a peer group—offering the physician an opportunity to interact with other physicians in a convenient, non-threatening environment—they are eager to engage.

Physicians like bulletin boards particularly well because the platforms are easy to use and because physicians are trained and experienced at written communications. They can see what others post and comment. Because the discussion includes doctors from different geographic areas and often offers anonymity, physicians typically express their ideas and opinions without concern about being judged by peers.

In one study I conducted, almost every physician thanked me—the moderator—for giving them the opportunity to participate. They knew that they were being heard in a way that appealed to them.

**2. The live video streaming interview.** These are completed using a computer webcam with a good Internet connection to support the streaming video. The technology and setup are easy and often as effective as face-to-face interviews. They are also much more convenient for the respondent, researcher, marketer and client.

Most computers today are sold with cameras capable of streaming video, so almost every physician's office now has this capability. Like the bulletin board application, Web streaming is expedient because the respondent does not have to abandon his or her regular activities to participate. Many processes involve scheduling the interview with the physician as a regular office appointment, with the practice manager handling technical pre-checks to be sure that everything is ready at the appointed time.

For health care services and pharma research, Web streaming is becoming an optimum method for individual interviews.

The convenience of both of these methodologies results in significantly higher satisfaction rates for the respondent physicians, making recruiting easier and less expensive. Also, since the interviews are conducted virtually, travel time and costs are eliminated so that projects and the resulting insights are completed faster.

**Author Bio:**



**Jim Bryson**

Jim Bryson is the founder and CEO of 20|20 Research, a leading global qualitative firm providing both in-person and online qualitative research software and services. A 26-year veteran of the market research industry, he is on the Marketing Research Association board of directors, has served three terms as president of the Qualitative Research Consultants Association and was recently named Market Research Executive of 2013 by Research Business Report. He can be reached at [jimb@2020research.com](mailto:jimb@2020research.com).

