

INSTAGRAM FOR OPHTHALMIC USE: THE NEW GRAND ROUNDS



Introducing a modern platform for presenting cases and sharing perspectives.

BY NIKOLA RAGUSA, MD, FACS

Instagram is the second most popular social media network in the world, behind only its parent company Facebook. With its ease of use and simplicity, it is easy to see why so many people have fallen in love with this photo-sharing platform. Serving more than 1 billion users worldwide and 191 million daily active users, Instagram is a great way for physicians to present themselves, their practices, and the interesting cases they encounter.

A GLOBAL DISCUSSION

Admittedly, I began using Instagram only a few months ago as a way of presenting myself professionally. After searching around the app and looking at other doctors' accounts, I finally settled on how I wanted to use this platform. I began using social media, more specifically Instagram, as a venue to post photos of interesting and unique cases in my practice. The more cases I posted, the more I noticed my audience asking questions or wanting to know about the content. In turn, I have found this to be a fun and engaging way to educate my peers and a great forum for connecting with doctors, residents, medical students, and occasionally even patients.

One aspect I have found surprising is that most social media audiences for ophthalmology consist of users from outside the United States. My international Instagram followers offer unique perspectives on challenging cases, and the global discussions that take place in the comments section often involve treatment options not available in the United States. This type of dialogue usually takes place in a grand rounds setting in academic environments. Although the grand rounds experience cannot truly be replicated outside of those scenarios, I have found that Instagram offers some elements of this type of educational forum.

INSTAGRAM HOW-TO

Instagram for ophthalmic use is quite simple: You post a case photo and then engage with your audience. There are several ways to go about engaging with others, and every user does it a bit differently. My favorite method is writing a caption describing the diagnosis and asking my followers what their suggested treatment would be (Figure).

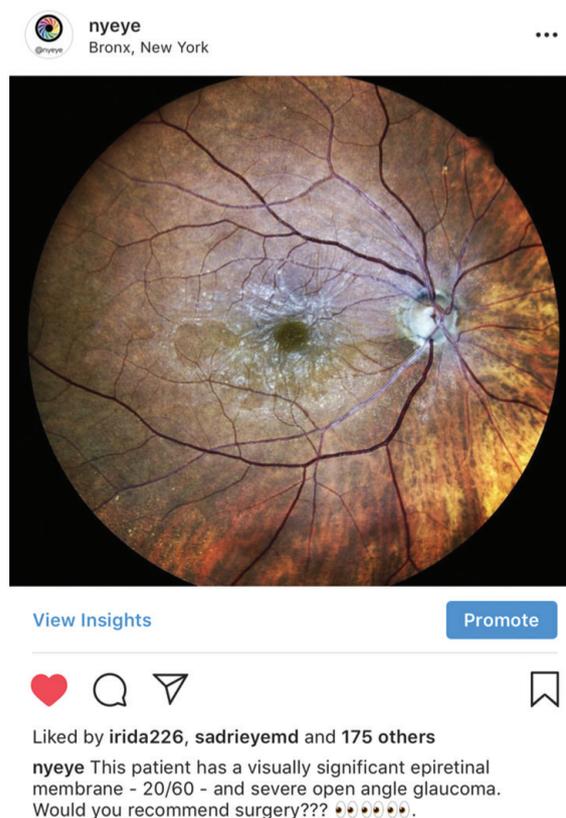


Figure. An effective way to engage with an Instagram audience is to post a clinical photo, note the diagnosis, and inquire about the proposed course of action.

In some circles, the use of hashtags can be considered taboo. For professional purposes, however, they can greatly expand your audience beyond your current followers. Hashtags draw in users who are working on similar cases or in similar fields. Therefore, I always include #ophthalmology and #ophthalmologist, and I continue to hashtag more specifically depending on the content of the case. For example, a post might read: *Here's a case of dense cortical #cataracts with #posteriorynechia, well-controlled #glaucoma, history of bilateral #retinaldetachment repair with light perception vision in both #eyes. Would you operate?*



"I consistently see physicians, residents, and medical students on opposite ends of the world engaging with each other and discussing cases on my Instagram feed."

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USERS TO FOLLOW FOR INTERACTIVE CONTENT

- ▶ @nyeye
- ▶ @cityeyemd
- ▶ @brooklyneyecenter
- ▶ @glaucomadoctor

Each Instagram post harbors a forum for discussion, be it through the sharing of different opinions, requests for more information, etc. I consistently see physicians, residents, and medical students on opposite ends of the world engaging with each other and discussing cases on my Instagram feed.

Additionally, hashtags can enable ophthalmologists to connect with physicians in a range of subspecialties. I am a glaucoma specialist, but many of the cases I post about involve cataracts or a combination of the two conditions. With my posts,

I attract glaucoma, retina, cornea, and oculoplastic specialists alike, often through hashtagging. Many times, these individuals are using the same hashtags for their cases, or they are looking for cases that include those hashtags. This is a great way for physicians to access education outside their subspecialty, giving them confidence to tend to these cases as they come their way.

SUMMARY

Presenting a medical problem and its treatment on Instagram is a way for medicine to keep up with the changing times of increased social media usage. As you set out on these new grand rounds, remember to keep your patients' data private at all times, as sharing private health information is a major HIPAA violation. Always ensure that there are no patient identifiers in your posts. Last, don't pigeon-hole yourself early on with interesting photos that you can produce only once in a while. Posting frequently is key to keeping your audience engaged and active. If you don't post often or post similar cases repeatedly, your followers will notice and your audience will dwindle. ■

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- Financial disclosure: None