Strategies to Achieve 1 Million Downloads: A CME/CE Podcast Case Study

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Introduction and Background

In a recent survey of over 600 primary care clinicians, Pri-Med found that CME podcasts are the most popular digital education format among respondents.[1] Our experience corroborates this—since launching in April 2017, *Frankly Speaking*, Pri-Med's first podcast, produced in collaboration with Frank Domino, MD, has amassed over 1 million downloads. Through the story of this podcast, this poster aims to provide a road map that any organization can use to create a successful CME/CE podcast with a loyal and growing audience base.

Methods

Pri-Med launched *Frankly Speaking* in January 2017 to raise Pri-Med's brand awareness and attract new clinician learners to our CME/CE content via thought leadership in the form of practical primary care updates. While the podcast steadily gained listeners, our producer and host fine-tuned it over time to deliver a more consistent format and listener experience and, after nearly two years, began offering CME credit.

Pri-Med's Podcast Journey

- **January 2017** — *Frankly Speaking* launches
- **December 2018** — *Frankly Speaking* reaches 140,000 downloads by year-end
- **April 2019** — *Frankly Speaking* begins offering CME credit
- **September 2020** — *Frankly Speaking* achieves 1 million downloads

Enhancements Added

- Standardized intro and outro with music and script
- "Practice Pointer" that highlights the key point stated at the end of each episode
- "Join us next time" teaser at the end of each episode

Components

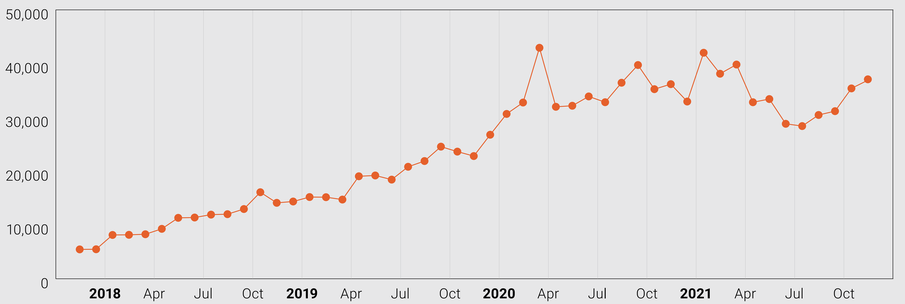
- 10-20 minute episodes are short enough to consume on the go and can offer CME credit
- All episodes are hosted by Frank Domino, MD. Having a single partner who creates content and provides clinical expertise has allowed for consistent "feel" across episodes and also allowed this project to continue on a regular cadence
- Six guest experts rotate.* Episodes are discussion based, often focused on a recent article, study, or guideline update
- Episodes are recorded either in-person or remotely. To enhance future planning of episodes, faculty records up to eight episodes at one time
- A consistent weekly release schedule every Monday ensures that content is relevant and up to date for listeners (8 weeks is the maximum length of time between an episode recording and release date)
- Audio can be uploaded to any Podcasting Host Service (Libsyn, PodBean, BuzzSprout). This host service will then distribute the podcast to platforms like Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and Google
- Listeners can consume via their phone, tablet, or pri-med.com and can claim CME credit at their convenience

Frankly Speaking is promoted strategically to Pri-Med's clinician audience via various tactics including a monthly podcast email, social media posts, and a weekly "Pri-Med Roundup" email series that highlights available episodes.

*All faculty selected to contribute to *Frankly Speaking* have no relevant financial relationships, allowing the content review process to be streamlined without mitigating relationships.

Results

Frankly Speaking Downloads Per Month (November 2017– October 2021)



Top Ten Most Downloaded *Frankly Speaking* Episodes

1. Effective Tool or Diet Fad? Can Intermittent Fasting Decrease Weight and Improve Cardiovascular Markers?
2. Ask the ID Expert: Common COVID-19 Questions in Primary Care
3. Coronavirus Update, March 6, 2020
4. Treating Strep Throat in Half the Time
5. Frankly Speaking Update: Common Questions About Coronavirus
6. A Brief Update of the Guidelines on the Management of Type 2 Diabetes
7. Skip the Colonoscopy?
8. The Dangers of Non-Nutritive Sweeteners: What Does the Data Say?
9. Heartburn–Why "Test and Treat" Is Best
10. Milk: Whole, Skim, or Something In Between?

To listen to *Frankly Speaking*, visit www.pri-med.com or tune in via your favorite podcast platforms.

90% OF 2021 LISTENERS WHO BEGAN *FRANKLY SPEAKING* ON PRI-MED.COM CLAIMED CME CREDIT FOR IT.

Conclusion

Reaching 1 million podcast downloads took three-and-a-half years. Below are top takeaways for embarking on your organization's own podcast development project:

- A consistent weekly release schedule is key to retaining clinician listeners and ensuring that episode topics are timely
- If possible, team up with an invested, knowledgeable faculty partner who is interested in driving content development and hosting the podcast
- The technology component is easier than you think; start simple and experiment with other tools when you are ready

About the Host, Frank Domino, MD

Frank Domino, MD, participates on Pri-Med's CME/CE Advisory Board, is Course Chair of Pri-Med East, and is Professor and the Pre-doctoral Education Director for the Department of Family Medicine and Community Health at the University of Massachusetts Chan Medical School.

"The goal of Frankly Speaking *is to take complex medical research and make it highly useful in clinical practice… We aim to include different members of the clinical team on the podcast team so that all audience members can hear from peers and better identify with a range of clinical topics."*

– Frank Domino, MD

[1] Pri-Med 2020 Primary Care CME Usage Study—March 2020.

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