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Social media in cardiology: Reasons to learn how to use it

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Abstract

Social media has changed the way we learn, educate, and interact with our peers. The dynamic nature of social media and their immediate availability through our portable devices (smartphones, tablets, smartwatches, etc.) is quickly transforming the way we participate in society. The scope of these digital tools is broad as they deal with many different aspects: Teaching and learning, case discussion, congresses coverage, peer to peer interaction, research are examples worth mentioning. The scientific societies considered more innovative, are promoting these tools between their members. These new concepts need to be known by the cardiologists to stay updated, as countless information is moving rapidly through these channels. We summarize the main reasons why learning how to use these tools to be part of the conversation is essential for the cardiologist in training or fully established.

Key words: Social media; Cardiology; Congress; Learning; Teaching; Interaction; Cardiovascular diseases; Impact Factor; Portable devices; Smartphone; Tablet

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Core tip: Social media has changed the way we learn, educate, and interact with our

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peers. The scientific societies considered more innovative are promoting these tools between their members. These new concepts need to be known by the cardiologists to stay updated, as countless information is moving rapidly through these channels. We summarize the main reasons why learning how to use these tools to be part of the conversation is essential for the cardiologist.

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INTRODUCTION

Social media could be considered as interactive computer-mediated communication tools which have important penetration rates in the general population in middle and high-income countries. Though, in health sciences, many stakeholders (*e.g.*, clinicians, academic institutions, professional colleges, administrators, ministries of health, between others) are unconscious of social media's relevance^[1].

Social media has changed the way we learn, educate, and interact with our peers. The dynamic nature of social media and their immediate availability through our portable devices (smartphones, tablets, smartwatches, *etc.*) is quickly transforming the way we participate in society^[2].

The scope of these digital tools is broad as they deal with many different aspects: Teaching and learning, case discussion, congresses coverage, peer to peer interaction, research are examples worth mentioning. A good summary was shown by Snipelisky^[3] about the 4 main reasons to be involved with social media tools: Personal use, networking, education and public health. There are many others, but these 4 aspects are probably the main points. As other authors have highlighted literacy in the "Digital Age" it is a necessity. The two unquestioned realities of the digital times are that you can produce your online digital story, or someone else will make it for you^[4].

REASONS TO LEARN HOW TO USE SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media tools like Twitter could be considered as a new core competency for cardiologists^[5]. Why is so important? Twitter can be used to learn, educate, network, and advocate; and these four reasons together give to the social media experts access to great opportunities.

Many authors underline the potential for engagement between peers, there are no boundaries and the communications are near to be immediate^[6,7]; even some people believe that mentoring could be possible through social media^[8]. Also contact with patients could be done through Social media but we must be cautious with these approach^[9].

Another reason to pay attention to these tools is the impact in the cardiology congresses, probably it is the best way to follow minute to minute a congress at home, previously you needed to wait for your partners coming from the Congress or read web chronicles or article publications, now is at the same time all over the world. You only need to search or follow a congress hashtag (like #ACC18 or #ESCCongress or #AHA17), after that you will reach all the content like you were in the congress arena^[10,11]. The impact of social media could be measured through the hashtags and is really high as we show in Table 1.

Another motive to be involved in social media is to reach a good knowledge about the current scientific research and discuss it with peers, maybe the discussion in social media could increment the citations of the papers or even to increase the impact of the author in the community when they discuss directly their research^[12,13]. In the last years, many journals are adopting a strategy to spread the journal content through social media^[14]. New ways to measuring the impact metrics of the research publications through social media are used now, one of the best examples Altmetrics^[15], that maybe could compete with the classic impact factor in the future.

Another interesting social media tool that needs to be mentioned is Youtube, as the

Table 1 Impact of Cardiology Social Media by conference hashtag measurement

Conference hashtag	Hashtag registration date ¹	Total tweets ² (thousands)	Total retweets (thousands)	Total participants (thousands)	Digital impressions ³ (millions)	Visuals ⁴ (thousands)	Papers ⁵ (thousands)
#AHA17	06/29/17	62.0	42.4	17.4	339.1	44.5	17.7
#ACC18	12/11/17	51.4	35.6	10.1	372.5	42.2	14.8
#ESC18	12/29/17	54.5	20.0	23.8	137.5	17.9	4.6

¹Registration date reflects the date the hashtag was registered with symplur.com. Individual hashtag data is from the registration date to access on September 22, 2018;

²The total number of unique tweets since the hashtag was registered on symplur.com;

³Impressions are computed by taking the number of times an account has tweeted multiplied by the account's number of followers repeated for all accounts, then finally summed up;

⁴The total number of times each photo, GIF, or video was shared;

⁵The total number of papers or links/URLs shared. Data from Symplur signals^[23].

second common search engine after Google. Many journals or scientific societies are using it for the dissemination of content and interaction with their potential audience^[16].

If you are an academic leader probably you need to embrace the social media tools as there is a need for leadership on the social media discussions; the classic leaders are reluctant to abandon the typical forums of debate and the discussion it will be not there again, the audience is worldwide and the way to discuss is quickly changing^[17,18].

For sure the future research will be about social media use, and it will focus on the impact on public health and the education of patients without any doubt. It is not noise it is a great opportunity^[19-21].

CONCLUSION

The scientific societies considered more innovative are promoting these tools between their members. These new concepts need to be known by the cardiologists in training or fully established to stay updated, as countless information is moving rapidly through these channels. Do as the cardiology leadership is doing and don't stay away from social media, there are more benefits than threats there^[22].

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