

Stay Connected, Stay Smiling, One Post At A Time- A Review On Social Media And Its Implications In Dentistry

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Abstract

Considering the wide reach of social media and the fact that it is not used solely for personal purposes, dental practitioners are expected to become more involved in it and use it effectively for various purposes, including marketing, communication, and connecting with patients. From engaging visuals that capture attention and turn visitors into loyal patients to cleverly crafted hashtags and ingeniously targeted advertisements this review article will throw light on the various tips that will help dental practice grow on social media as fast as possible.

Keywords: Social Media, Hashtags, Dental Professional

INTRODUCTION

Social media has moved beyond being a tool for young individuals to share their private lives (pictures, messages) to fostering serious discussion on technology and business.

Social media is making interactions between end users and service providers possible by providing relatively simple, easy to access and unbiased platforms for sharing feedback.

Access to oral health care services around the world is limited by a lack of universal coverage. The internet and social media can be an important source for patients to access supplementary oral health related information¹.

WHAT IS SOCIAL MEDIA?

Social Media is an online platform for communicating and engaging with the public. Social Media is shifting communication into an interactive two-way approach by producing a dialogue between those either receiving or delivering the information (Hawn, 2009). Some major Social Media examples include Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube¹.

TYPES OF SOCIAL MEDIA

- Media related component: synchronous face-to-face communication different types of social media
- Social dimension: self-presentation, whereby individual's interactions have the purpose of trying to control others impressions of them.

SOCIAL MEDIA ECOLOGY

- Identify
- Groups formation
- Conversations
- Social Media Relationship
- Reputation
- Sharing

GUIDANCE ON USING SOCIAL MEDIA

Standards of dental team states that a dentist should not post any information or comments about patients on social networking or blogging sites. If a dentist uses professional social media to discuss anonymised cases for the purpose of discussing practice, he/she must be careful that the patient or patients cannot be identified.

A dentist is ethically bound to treat colleagues fairly and with respect, in all situations and in all forms of interaction and communication. The dentist should not bully, harass, or unfairly discriminate against them. Social media should not be used as a way of raising concerns^{2,3}.

BENEFITS OF USING SOCIAL MEDIA BY DENTISTS

- Increased interactions with others
- More available, shared and tailored information
- Increased accessibility and widening access
- Peer / social / emotional support
- Public health surveillance

USES

- Provide health information on a range of conditions
- Provide answers to medical questions
- Facilitate dialogue between patients to patients, and patients and health professionals
- Collect data on patient experiences and opinions
- Used for health intervention, health promotion and health education
- Provide online consultations³

WEB BASED APPLICATION

These kind of health education applications and softwares require internet to run and provides a platform for consumers to access health information. Various kind of health education web based apps/ software's are as follows:

- YouTube
- Google
- Twitter
- Facebook
- LinkedIn
- Websites such as DCI, WHO
- Yahoo answers
- Online journals

WEBSITE FOR ORAL EDUCATION

- April 25, 2011 -- The ADA entered into an agreement with Sharecare, an online resource that allows the public to submit health-related questions and have them answered by health professionals, to provide dental-specific expertise to the site.
- Young Dental has produced a brochure to help patients better understand the oral-systemic health link. The brochure can be downloaded free at <http://www.youngdental.com/pdf/OralHealthLit.pdf>, or by visiting the Young Dental site
- The Oral Cancer Foundation has put together a nice web site for professionals and patients alike, www.oralcancerfoundation.org.
- The National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research have a web page full of educational resources at [tp://www.nidcr.nih.gov/EducationalResources/](http://www.nidcr.nih.gov/EducationalResources/).

DESKTOP BASED APPLICATION

These kind of health education apps are of two kinds i.e. online apps & offline apps.

- Examples: Diagnostic software, Public health and surveillance, Dental management and patient record imaging/visualization⁴.

MOBILE BASED APPLICATION

- Smart phones, the most common "personal computer" today, has revolutionized the communication landscape.
- Communication via smart phones is personalized: smart phones store and exchange large amounts of personal information and users are able to customize their phones to suit their personal preferences and needs⁵.
- The mobile revolution is offering an opportunity to provide medical support when and where people need it. Large numbers and varieties of medical and health-related applications exist on the market today.

• From basic apps composed of text message reminders, these apps play a multitude of functions in health and healthcare.

BUILDING A SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY

Define your goals: What do you hope to achieve with social media

- Define your audience(s): Who do you want to reach
- Identify your resources: funding if applicable
- Identify which technologies are appropriate
- Choose appropriate content
- Manage expectations related to public and key interests
- Deliver messages

WAYS FOR A DENTAL PROFESSIONAL TO USE SOCIAL MEDIA

- Promoting practice services, procedures, or special offers
- Provide information and links to articles on dental health to patients
- Thank patients or respond to questions or comments
- Read about breaking industry news and new product information by following dental companies, publications, organizations, and associations
- Conduct surveys
- Share cases with colleagues and continue to learn from one another
- Ask for advice from colleagues when presented with a challenge identify colleagues where they can refer to when current patients are moving⁵.

LIMITATIONS

- Lack of reliability and Quality concerns
- Lack of confidentiality & privacy
- Often unaware of the risks of disclosing personal information online
- Risks associated with communicating harmful or incorrect advice using social media
- Information overload
- Not sure how to correctly apply information found online to their personal health situation
- Adverse health consequences
- Negative health behaviour
- Social media may discourage patients from visiting health professionals⁶.

CHALLENGES

These platforms need to be continuously updated. They require a person or a team with social media knowledge to maintain them. They require a significant investment in time and commitment. There are concerns regarding the quantity and the quality of information available on the Internet. In 1982, the bestseller of Megatrends and John stated: "We are drowning in information, but starved for knowledge".

Organizations, Institutions and Agencies need to step up and develop social media presence by using these platforms as a tool to communicate credible, accurate and reliable information. As they do so, the public will turn to them and feel confident about messages these sites provide to achieve better health outcomes

ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

Social media platforms can be excellent for creating and sustaining relationships as well as enhancing ties among communities and dental public health professionals. However, the openness of social media may rise potential ethical issues^{6,7}.

- Are these platforms invading the privacy of the public?
- Are we being honest with the people or just using these tools as propaganda for our own interest?
- Can people maintain their integrity while they are using these platforms?

CONCLUSION

Social media allows for the tailoring of messages to help acknowledge concern, promote action, and listen to what people are saying about dental health-related topics.

Social media networks can be a valuable tool to better understand current interests, assess knowledge levels, and address potential misunderstandings or myths about certain health topics. The use of social media is going to continue to grow. Dental public health professionals need to learn about how to deliver health programs, products and information using these platforms. It is about providing quality and relevant dental public health information.

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