

The Emerging Role of Social Media in Urology Practice

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In this modern era, social media has become an integral and inevitable part of our daily lives. It allows effective dissemination of knowledge and rapid communication across our global community. While social media certainly has its pitfalls, we can learn to use it effectively in our urological practice.

This special issue on “Social Media in Urology Made Easy” is dedicated to providing comprehensive and important information regarding the utility of social media and its potential implications in the future.

Twitter appears to be the preferred social media platform for knowledge dissemination among health care professionals. In the study by Dr Spencer Bell et al., the authors report the results of a social media network analysis on Twitter and note that there was a steady increase in Twitter representation among academic urologists[1]. Urologic oncology represents the largest cohort, but andrology and reconstructive urology represent the highest proportion of their respective subspecialties. This study provides important insight into the constitution of the target audience on this social media platform.

Apart from medical professionals, it is also important to understand whether social media platforms have a significant influence among medical students globally. The study by Dr Rachel Kaufman et al. investigated the degree of reach and engagement across various social media platforms including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok[2]. The authors found that Twitter allows for engagement with a statistically significantly large proportion of medical students, and TikTok allows access to a numerically larger audience of medical students. This study provides information regarding the reach of urology on social media, which will be very helpful for effective education and information dissemination across undergraduate and post-graduate residency programs.

“Likes” is perhaps one of the most well-known metrics in determining how engaging one post or tweet is. However, apart from showing how trendy a post or tweet is, does it actually carry any important implications? In their paper, Dr Justin Loloï et al. discuss the various effects of social media usage in terms of branding, education, networking, research, and enhanced recruitment efforts[3]. The authors also provide guidance for engaging in social media as a medical professional, and summarize the important principles regarding appropriate use of social media.

The importance of social media engagement has been increasingly recognized by urology journals, but how social media presence correlates with traditional journal metrics such as Scimago Journal & Country Rank, h-index, and Scopus CiteScore, is largely unknown[4-6]. In a study of traditional and social media metrics, Dr Wei Zheng So and colleagues found that 54.2% of all urology journals had at least one form of social media presence[7]. Urology journals with social media presence had significantly higher traditional metric values than journals without social media presence. The study shows that urology journals can disseminate the findings of research studies effectively to the urological community via the social media platforms, and this in turn will improve citations in the long run.

Social media platforms are also increasingly used by urological societies. In the paper by Dr Nikita Bhatt et al., The European Association of Urology Guideline Dissemination Committee discusses the novel methods of social media dissemination, the importance of maintaining quality, ethics, and reliability in social media, and how societies can play an active role in this[8]. This paper provides important guidance on how societies can engage medical professionals and disseminate useful information to the urology community more effectively. The authors also highlight the importance of having an authoritative guideline on the use of social media.

Social media may also play a role in research work, such as cross-sectional surveys. Conventionally, emails are often used to disseminate surveys. In this modern era, there is increasing use of social media platforms in survey dissemination. In their review paper, Dr William Ong et al. discuss tips and pitfalls in using social media platforms for survey dissemination[9]. The main advantages of social media-based surveys include convenience and flexibility of survey design, relatively low cost, anonymity of responders, and the ability to reach a broader population across geographical boundaries; however, cautious measures must be adopted to avoid data duplication, disruption, and inaccuracy.

Crowdsource funding to obtain financial support for a project through public engagement is now widely used, and it may carry important implications in our field as well. Dr Kevin Byrnes et al. discuss the concept of crowdfunding and the practicality of such applications, and describe the characteristics of successful campaigns[10]. Apart from seeking funding opportunities, the concept of crowdsourcing can also be used in research projects to improve site engagement, disseminate research findings, and network with collaborators. Certainly, the use of social media has major benefits in conducting research work from a global perspective.

Last but not least, we must be aware of the potential harm and concerns relating to social media. Social media misinformation is a genuine problem across

various urological conditions, and the study by Dr Chaoyong Wang et al. showed that pelvic organ prolapse is no exception[11]. As pointed out by Dr Brian Stork, we as urologists should refute inaccurate information when we see it, share medically correct information, and incorporate new technology into our practices[12]. For example, the Urology Care Foundation has created condition-specific, QR-coded educational materials that can be readily accessed with smartphones[13]. We must stand against medical misinformation and make an effort to ensure dissemination of accurate information to our patients and the general public.

This special issue provides comprehensive coverage across various aspects of social media, and we hope the information will be useful for our readers. *SIU Journal* also embraces the utility of social media, and we actively use our Twitter account (@SIU_urology) to disseminate the findings of the published papers to our audience. Currently, we have over 1000 followers on the Twitter platform, and we would like to solicit your help in driving our social media platforms. The *SIUJ* is a platinum open access journal, so the full text of all published articles can be viewed or downloaded without cost. Please consider submitting your research papers to our journal, and we will ensure that your work is disseminated effectively to the urology community.

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