

Novel Methods of Social Media Dissemination in Urology

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Abstract

Social Media (SoMe) platforms are widely used by urologists with over 99% using SoMe and 63% of young urologists rating the influence of SoMe on knowledge acquisition as moderate to high. The urology community is abreast with the SoMe revolution in many ways but several new methods of SoMe dissemination remain to be explored. These provide an exciting future for SoMe enthusiasts in urology and beyond. In this article, the European Association of Urology Dissemination Committee explores these novel methods of SoMe dissemination while discussing the importance of maintaining quality, ethics, and reliability in SoMe and the role EAU plays in it.

Social media (SoMe) has become an integral part of our personal and professional lives. Urology as a specialty has embraced SoMe enthusiastically over the years, with a large presence on well-known SoMe platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube[1]. These platforms are widely used by urologists, with over 99% using SoMe and 63% of young urologists rating the influence of SoMe on knowledge acquisition as moderate to high[2]. This has paved the way for several novel platforms in recent times including Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok. These platforms have a prominent audiovisual component and have altered the way we share content on SoMe. TikTok involves sharing 15-second videos and is one of the fastest-growing SoMe platforms with over 1.1 billion active users worldwide. The hashtags #urology and #urologist have 411.7 and 68.4 million views, respectively, on TikTok[3]. Similarly, #urology on Instagram revealed 324K posts. Videos on these platforms are most commonly published by physicians, but news media, independent users, and patients can also contribute to the videos. LinkedIn is a well-established online platform with an aim to improve networking among professionals, with several professional bodies and guideline associations having an online presence on LinkedIn—for example, the European Association of Urology (EAU) and the American Urological Association (AUA).

Existing platforms such as Twitter and Instagram are also constantly reinventing themselves to keep up with the changing face of SoMe. Reels are short videos, ranging from 90 seconds on Instagram to 2 minutes on Twitter, that provide descriptive and visually engaging content. Twitter Space allows you to have audio conversations live with up to 10 speakers and even record them. This would be a useful platform to have small journal clubs or in-depth educational discussions including guidelines and new evidence. Instagram has recently introduced a subscription feature on a trial basis as part of the “Precision SoMe Content,” the idea behind which is to utilize specific platforms to disseminate personalized and exclusive content to subscribed users[4]. Caffeine and Twitch are SoMe platforms that allow live video broadcast that can also be used by journals, guideline associations, and congresses around the world. After the COVID-19 pandemic, most congresses are using a hybrid approach to engage remote audiences.

Key Words

Guidelines, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, podcast, YouTube, urology

Competing Interests

None declared.

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Abbreviations

AUA American Urological Association
 EAU European Association of Urology
 SoMe social media

SoMe platforms play a key role in remote engagement through live tweeting, session broadcast, and interviews. One such example is EAU TV during the EAU congress each year, which discusses highlights from the congress with experts in the field.

Podcasts have revolutionized dissemination of educational content, by providing an on-the-go option for content that is convenient and free. A search for urology podcasts on Google Play returned over 75 relevant podcast channels. These include a range of urological association podcasts such as the EAU guidelines podcasts discussing guidelines with the panel members[4], AUA and British Association of Urological Surgeons podcasts; journal podcasts, for example, Journal of Urology, British Journal of Urology International and its knowledge platform (BJUI Knowledge); and educational podcasts, for example, GU Cast, The Urology Doc Podcast, and EMPIRE Urology. Podcasts also improve patient engagement by providing reliable patient education on urology health issues, such as the Urology Care Podcast by the AUA. YouTube is host to several urology videos, ranging from educational and surgical videos to patient information videos. A recent survey suggested that more than any other resource, YouTube is the most used professional platform for urologists and young urologists for learning surgical skills[5].

In addition to newer platforms, newer methods of disseminating content on existing platforms has been explored and successfully implemented. The EAU Guidelines Office as a pioneer of SoMe for dissemination of its world-renowned guidelines, used in 75 countries around the world, has used “awareness days campaign” to engage patients and their advocates[1,6,7]. By disseminating relevant EAU guidelines on awareness days, for example, prostate cancer screening during Movember engagement and a separate patient information account (EAU Patient Information), the EAU Dissemination Committee has made a conscious effort to improve patient engagement. The Dissemination Committee has also implemented Urology Cheat Sheets to format the guidelines into the schematic and practical format, thereby improving uptake. These sheets serve as an easy-to-digest educational resource for residents and clinicians looking for a prompt update of their clinical practice. Additionally, the sheets are currently receiving significant social media engagement, with an average of 30 000 impressions on Twitter alone. Posts promoting

the EAU Guidelines Cheat Sheets were among the ones with the highest impact launched from the official EAU account (@uroweb) in 2021 and 2022.

SoMe is a brilliant tool for education, patient engagement, and networking. It has its drawbacks in terms of sharing of misinformation on both old and new platforms. Of 55 TikTok videos with the hashtag #prostatecancer, 98.2% were of moderate to poor quality, 41% of them contained a significant amount of misinformation, and 10.1% of all videos had an apparent commercial bias[8]. These videos had accumulated 134 944 individual views. The EAU previously published a guideline on the use of SoMe to assist clinicians[9]. To strengthen our commitment to ethical application and utilization of SoMe within urology and the wider healthcare community, the Dissemination Committee is drafting a new Guideline Chapter on SoMe utilization in healthcare[7]. The chapter provides a layout of the SoMe platforms available and their potential benefits, in addition to an in-depth manual for using SoMe as a healthcare professional, with several strategies to abide by if one is active on SoMe in a professional capacity—for example, avoiding defamatory comments, knowing your employer’s policies on SoMe, and avoiding self-promotion or advertisement[1]. The Guideline Chapter provides guidance on appropriate use of SoMe analytics to ensure good engagement such as the effective use of hashtags. It also describes the current scale of the issue with SoMe misinformation and ways of investigating misinformation such as the DISCERN scoring system to assess quality of information in videos and the Certificate of Quality Health on the Net Foundation Code of Conduct (HONcode) to standardize the quality of medical information on the internet, among others. Suggestions are provided on combating misinformation by promoting information from reliable sources such as professional bodies or guidelines, and appropriately qualifying the content using tools such as Patient Education PEMAT Audio Visual tools and Global Quality Score (GQS), among others.

In conclusion, the urology community is abreast with the SoMe revolution in many ways, but several new methods of SoMe dissemination remain to be explored. These provide an exciting future for SoMe enthusiasts in urology and beyond. It is vital to ensure quality, ethics, and reliability are at the heart of our SoMe journey, and as such investigating the content online and auditing it will help us improve the content we disseminate. The EAU Dissemination Committee guidelines on SoMe will provide a much-needed etiquette for SoMe dissemination in the near future.

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