



Social networking sites: emerging tools for communication in neurosurgery

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The emergence of social media has changed our world forever. Its presence has impacted our relationships, businesses, politics, entertainment industry, social movements, and overall view of the world. Social media has eliminated communication barriers and has paved the way for people to connect, collaborate, and share their opinions and creations with anyone who is willing to listen. Social media is breaking down hierarchical, regional, age, and cultural boundaries by providing a communication platform that spans across the globe and reaches us all. We can now find out what we want from whomever we want, no matter where they are located on this planet.

In their review article “Social media for dissemination and public engagement in Neurosurgery - the example of Brainbook”, the authors wanted to explore the role of social media in neurosurgical public engagement. Content from Brainbook, a multi-platform, social media-based resource that was created specifically to enhance public engagement in neurosurgery, has been used as an illustrative example of what can be achieved.

A Brainbook case was created in collaboration with the NIH Global Health Research Group on Neurotrauma and presented over 3 days (23–25 February 2018). YouTube videos were created depicting the management of an acute subdural haematoma using patient interviews, medical illustration, consultant-led discussion and operative footage. Content was shared across all Brainbook social media platforms and analytics were gathered through social media applications. Results over a 72-h time period, and across multiple social media accounts, 101,418 impressions were

achieved (defined as penetrance onto individual media feeds and total views of the content), with active discussion on Twitter.

It is a nice illustration of how modern social media can be used for educating the public, engage the public and create awareness, especially in a field like neurosurgery which is rather unknown to the general public. The speed of spreading more or less everything through these social media is incredible. For me, this article is a “proof of concept” and as such certainly interesting. However, it would have been good to also add some critical notes, e.g. how to ensure that proper material is spread, how to avoid commercial interest and how to prevent misuse of such videos and materials.

Social media has grown tremendously in the last few years. It enables people to effectively mobilise, rise up and speak out on issues that they consider important. The way technology is growing, it is obvious that more and more people are going to grasp its benefits. But while we mostly hear about the enrichment that social media is to our lives, some may argue that there is a significant flip side to the phenomenon as well. There seems to be a rather strong divide in approaching the consequences of substantial social media usage. One half tends to mostly focus on the negative consequences and effects, while the other half highlights the positive impact that social media usage has on people. Just like anything which can be used for both good and bad, social media have also provided the negative and positive ways for the people. It is all about the usage and getting things done positively by using the power of social media. It is in the hands of the user to use it to its advantage.

The first and main advantage of the social media is connectivity. People from anywhere can connect with anyone, regardless of the location and religion. The beauty of social media is that you can connect with anyone to learn and share your thoughts. And as this article also nicely shows, social media has a lot of benefits for education. It is very easy to educate yourself from others who are experts and professionals via the social media. You can follow anyone to learn from him/her

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and enhance your knowledge about any field. Regardless of your location and educational background you can educate yourself, without paying for it. In this single case of a subdural haematoma, showing and explaining it on social media can be an effective method of not only disseminating neurosurgical knowledge, but activating and engaging the public, allied healthcare professionals, medical students and neurosurgeons. And there are more advantages, it can be used for information, to check facts and to update yourself from the latest happenings around in the world. It is also easy to promote offline and online businesses, and certainly to promote an NGO, social welfare activities and donations for the needy people.

One downside is that personal data and privacy can easily be hacked and shared on the Internet, which can make financial losses and loss to personal life. Similarly, identity theft is another issue; fraud and scams are lurking. Social media can also easily ruin someone's reputation just by creating a false story and spreading across the social media.

I believe that the impact that social media usage has on our lives can simply not be approached as black and white. I stand on a middle ground. I acknowledge the incredible potential for connection, inclusion and flourishing of personal networks and social capital that social media brings to our lives. But I also recognise the dangers that lurk when you realise what such an immensely powerful tool as social media can also be used for in destructive ways. When I take a step back, I realise that we are really only at the dawn of the social media era and only time can tell in what ways immersing our lives into these networks has changed us; emotionally, psychologically and socially. We will see more and more use of social media also in our field of neurosurgery but regarding such use, we must never stop studying, analysing and questioning it because the fact of the matter is: The emergence of social media has changed our world forever and we can never stop seeking new ways to better understand the world we live in.