

Embracing the digital frontier: A perspective on social media's impact in transforming global oncology communication

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INTRODUCTION

In various fields such as engineering, digital marketing, advertising, and design, the pervasive influence of social media is undeniable. Notably, also the academic and scientific communities have recently integrated these technological tools into their practices. Dr. Don Dizon's enlightening Keynote Conference, "Social Media in Medicine: Outputs from the First Collaboration for Using Social Media in Oncology," passionately underscores the profound impact of an online presence of single individuals and communities.¹

We commonly refer to social media as Internet-based tools that facilitate the gathering, communicating and sharing of information, ideas, personal messages, images, and collaborative efforts in real-time. Their professional utilization within the healthcare sector brings forth several advantages,

including enhanced patient care, strengthened trust in the profession, networking opportunities, avenues for education, and pathways for professional advancement (Figure 1).

Professional networking is essential for forming beneficial relationships among like-minded individuals. Effective platforms for this include Clubhouse, TikTok, Twitter, Discord, Twitch, Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn, which are useful for sharing lectures, research, advancements, and promoting ongoing learning among healthcare professionals. These platforms also facilitate educational and clinical discussions, enhancing academic growth. Research indicates that Twitter engagement is maximized by specifying the applicable population groups and using multimedia content, though users need clarity on which messages are evidence-based.

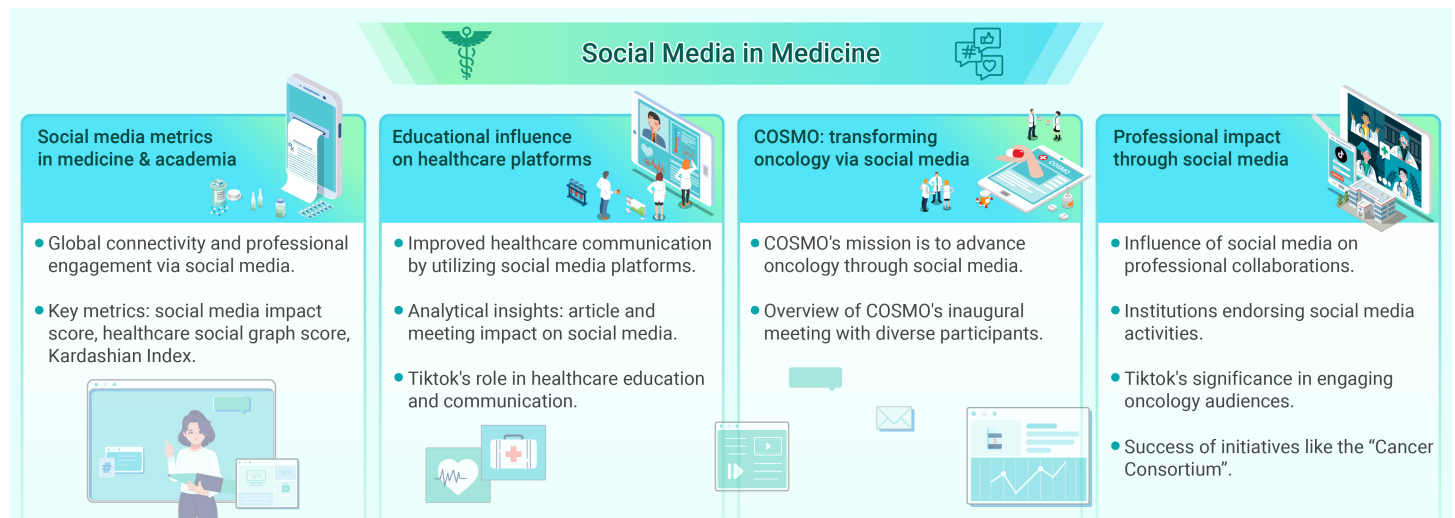


Figure 1. Conceptual overview of social media's impact on healthcare communication This figure presents a comprehensive view of the integration of social media into healthcare communication, illustrating its multifaceted impact on transforming healthcare communication and professional practices. It highlights the diverse applications and implications of social media for the healthcare industry.

DISCUSSION

Assessing social media impact and metrics in academia and healthcare communication

The growing importance of social media for sharing educational and scientific information requires a comprehensive evaluation of its impact on scholarly output. Traditional publication metrics, such as impact factor and citation count, have been foundational but may not fully capture non-traditional academic scholarship on social media. A study by Afzul-Dadzie et al. (2023) synthesizes varied opinions on social media health information (SMHI) quality in the literature and recommends that future research propose quality

evaluation criteria and instruments specifically for Social Media Health Information (SMHI).² Specific indicators like altmetrics, #SoME_Score, Healthcare Social Graph Score, Kardashian Index, and Twimetric Factor complement traditional bibliometric indicators, offering a nuanced understanding of research impact in the digital age.³

Altmetrics tracks scholarly influence in real-time across social media, news, and downloads, complementing citation counts by revealing hidden impacts and public engagement, useful for academic advancement and grant applications. However, they don't circumvent citation delays, leading to the creation of the #SoME_Score. This new index predicts scientific impact soon

after publication by weighting components like news, blogs, and peer-review based on their correlation with citations, offering a more accurate predictive measure for high-impact papers.

The Healthcare Social Graph (HSG) score measures social media impact for healthcare stakeholders, while the Twimply factor predicts future citations based on tweets within the first week post-publication. The Kardashian Index humorously compares a scientist's social media presence to their citation record. These novel scales have limitations and can diverge from traditional bibliometric indicators, especially as some researchers choose anonymity on social media, impacting data accuracy.

The dynamic landscape of healthcare communication: TikTok, clubhouse, and Dr. Don Dizon's strategic insights

The integration of social media into healthcare communication has been possible thanks to innovative platforms like TikTok and Clubhouse, and Dr. Don Dizon stands as a leader in exploring their potential within the realm of scientific discourse.⁴ Tik-Tok, launched in 2016, has transformed global digital culture through its short-form video format and algorithm-driven content delivery. The platform's unique ability to rapidly disseminate trends and challenges provides an intriguing lens for studying information diffusion in the digital age.

In healthcare communication, TikTok's potential appears significant. As Dr. Dizon suggests we could exploit the platform not only for disseminating medical information but also for sparking conversations around health-related topics among the scientific community and beyond. As emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic, platforms like TikTok prove invaluable in supporting healthcare initiatives and promoting scientific literacy.

In addition to platforms like TikTok, another innovative social media platform contributing to healthcare communication is Clubhouse. Launched in 2020, Clubhouse operates on an audio-based model, where users engage in live discussions and forums within virtual rooms.

Naturally, different social media platforms will have different statistics in which data can be analyzed, presenting a challenge for comprehensive data collection and combination.

Collaborations for outcomes using social media in oncology (COSMO): transforming healthcare engagement in the digital era

The healthcare landscape is transforming with social media playing a vital role in collaboration and knowledge dissemination among physicians as well as the general population. Established in 2015, Collaborations for outcomes Using social media in oncology (COSMO) led by Dr. Don Dizon at ASCO explores social media's potential through crowd-sourced collaborations on Twitter, forming a virtual alliance across oncology sub-specializations. COSMO provides insights into social media's applications and limitations, serving as a guide for professionals navigating this dynamic landscape. A distinctive feature is its commitment to diversity, actively involving junior doctors and promoting inclusivity. The virtual nature of COSMO facilitates global participation, impacting social media platforms, particularly Twitter, and promoting discussions on health-related topics. In the evolving healthcare landscape, COSMO's role in fostering collaboration and spreading knowledge remains crucial. This growing field of social media and medicine is there to incorporate research into practice but is also used to share information on a broader scope of an individual's job. Healthcare professionals often use social media to share research and helpful tips for patients who might want to take better care of themselves. It can be used to share information happening in the field that is outside of the scope of research. It is a growing and vital information-sharing tool, especially in the healthcare field.

Social Media as a Cornerstone in Crafting Professional Identities and Meaningful Connections in Healthcare

In the evolving medical landscape, social media has become a crucial tool for healthcare practitioners, transforming from casual platforms to integral sources of information. Patients often rely on online sources like Google, emphasizing the need for a controlled online presence. Creating a well-rounded profile on platforms such as Google Scholar, Doximity, and institu-

tional pages is therefore like building a personal brand. Dr. Dizon underscores the importance of authenticity in online engagement, urging practitioners not only to have a presence but to genuinely connect with the audience. In oncology and medicine, an active presence in online platforms is no longer optional but a vital part of the profession. Dr. Dizon advocates for strategic social media use, encouraging to craft a robust and authentic professional presence through these channels enabling increased connectivity with patients, providing insights into the latest advancements, and fostering dynamic engagement with peers, with the positive side effect of shaping the landscape of oncology and medicine.⁵ Medical professionals, by actively participating in social media, can therefore enhance their impact globally, enrich patient care, contribute to research, and elevate collective discourse within the medical community. Through deliberate engagement, they can therefore forge a distinctive professional identity and shape the trajectory of healthcare.

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

Social media platforms have revolutionized how information is disseminated, collaborations are forged, and professional identities are shaped within the medical community. Embracing these platforms is crucial for healthcare professionals seeking to stay connected, informed, and influential in their respective fields.

As part of MedNews Week, founded by Chandler Park MD, FACP, and Yan Leyfman MD, we are also first-hand dedicated to providing the most up-to-date information in healthcare thanks to the growing popularity and reach of social media. MedNews Week was developed with a mission to combat global healthcare misinformation and contribute to healthcare education, particularly in developing and redeveloping countries globally.

Dr. Dizon emphasizes authenticity in online interactions to maintain professional integrity and credibility. Social media platforms like TikTok, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Clubhouse are pivotal for shaping healthcare communication, offering unique opportunities to share information and engage with patients and colleagues. Active participation helps build a professional identity, form genuine relationships, and impact healthcare. Integrating social media into healthcare communication is a transformative force, enhancing influence and contributing to healthcare progress, aligning with MedNews Week's mission.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors jointly agreed to submit this work for publication. All the authors listed above contributed to the work, including its conceptualization, methodology, validation, formal analysis, investigation, resources, data curation, writing—original draft preparation, writing—review and editing, visualization, supervision, and project administration. All authors were involved in the conceptional design of this manuscript, drafting this work along with revisions critical for intellectual content, and final approval of the manuscript. All authors jointly agree to the accuracy of this work and are in favor of submitting it for publication. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

The authors declare no competing interests.