

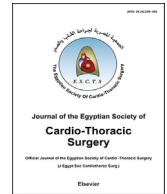
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Patterns of use of social media in cardiothoracic surgery; surgeons' prospective

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ABSTRACT

Background: Social media browsing became a daily activity of most people including physicians. The use of social media in healthcare can help patients, healthcare professionals, and researchers to keep more updated. However, there are concerns about the risks of using social media for healthcare providers including high rates of false information, and the opportunity cost of using physician time. This study aims to define how cardiothoracic surgeons used social media and the effect of its use on surgical practice and patients' management progress.

Methods: The present study was a cross-sectional pilot study based on online questionnaire. The convenient sample was recruited through announcement at cardiothoracic surgeons' Facebook groups and also by email invitations for members of cardiothoracic societies.

Results: The number of respondents was 83 physicians. About the half of the sample were Egyptians (50.6%). There was a statistically significant difference between Egyptian and non-Egyptian cardiothoracic surgeons as regards time spent while using social media as Egyptians spent more time. Most of respondents used social media for official purposes as advertisement and patients' education. Thirty percent of surgeons thought that, the social media were sometimes relevant and helpful for their jobs and this was mainly by increasing communication with other colleagues.

Conclusions: Social media is modifying the nature of interaction between healthcare workers and patients. There is a significant need and a great opportunity for healthcare professionals to provide extra support for patients and their careers beyond the hospital walls using social media.

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1. Introduction

Social media easily allows the public sharing of information and ideas. Recently, transparency and the open sharing of information between doctors and patients must be guaranteed and the conflicts between social media and healthcare should be seriously taken into consideration [1].

It has been agreed that interactive and cooperative atmosphere for patients, surgeons, and researchers can be created by informative sharing on social media and even improves quality of care. Besides, risks of using social media for healthcare providers include high rates of false information, obstacles in verifying the credibility of sources, a lot of information available on internet, concerning about professionalism, and the opportunity cost of using physician time [1].

After all, the use of social media in healthcare can help patients, healthcare professionals, and researchers to keep more updated, but specific guidelines for appropriate use are necessarily needed. Nowadays, the use of social media by surgeons is not only encouraged but should be a must to patients and colleagues to help spread important pieces of information. In a growing digital revolution, involvement in social media allows surgeons to stay within a network along with the surrounding community and help conducting their content to a big audience while having their online presence [2].

The aim of current study is to define how cardiothoracic surgeons used social media and the effect of its use on surgical practice and patients' management progress.

2. Participants and methods

We conducted an online questionnaire about the current state of social media use among cardiothoracic surgeons.

2.1. Participants

The present study was a cross-sectional pilot study based on online questionnaire. The convenient sample was recruited through announcement at cardiothoracic surgeons' Facebook groups (Egyptian society of cardiothoracic surgery group "ESCTS group", Thoracic surgery group and The European association of cardiothoracic surgery) and also by email invitations for members of cardiothoracic societies. Nearly 1000 cardiothoracic surgeons were invited to complete the questionnaire but only 83 responded. The duration of recruitment was one month.

Participants were introduced with the study purpose and contents before answering the questions. After they were fully instructed, they carried on fulfilling the questions online based on their own willingness. The participants were invited to complete a series of questions related to their use of social media.

2.2. Questionnaire development

The study questionnaire was developed by the author after a literature review [2–6]. It consisted of 14- items divided over four parts (Table 1).

2.3. Data analysis

Analysis of data was done using IBM SPSS software, version 20. Variables were expressed as frequency and percentage. Chi-square test was used to compare variables. Level of significance "P" value was evaluated, where P value < 0.05 was considered statistically significant.

3. Results

The number of respondents was 83 physicians. About the half of the sample were Egyptians (50.6%). Most of them described themselves as cardiothoracic surgeons (36%) followed by thoracic surgeons (30%) then cardiac surgeons (17%), perfusionist (10%) and residents. The main site of practice was tertiary level hospitals (42%) followed by academic institutes (24%) and then general and private hospitals (17% and 10%) respectively.

3.1. Use of the social media

There was a statistically significant difference between Egyptian and non- Egyptian cardiothoracic surgeons as regards time spent while using social media (Table 2). Type of social media usually used is demonstrated in Fig. 1.

3.2. Official/professional use of social media

Most of respondents used social media for official purposes as advertisement and patients' education beside the personal use (Fig. 2). About seventeen percent of them had an official account other than the personal one.

Table 2 shows the official use patterns among Egyptians and non-Egyptian cardiothoracic surgeons.

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