

Updated Survey of Social Media Use in the American Urological Association

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Abstract

Introduction: We performed a more detailed, updated analysis of social media use by AUA members. Specifically we sought to characterize the frequency of and reason for using different social media platforms as well as barriers to social media use.

Methods: From November to December 2013 we sent a 21-item survey on social media use to all 16,376 AUA members with a valid email address. A total of 1,114 members (6.8%) completed the survey. Responses were tallied and statistical analysis was performed to evaluate use patterns based on demographic characteristics.

Results: Overall 71% of AUA members who responded to the survey currently had a social media account. The most popular social media platform was Facebook® (89% of respondents), followed by LinkedIn® (59%), YouTube™ (54%), Twitter® (48%) and Google+™ (35%). All platforms except LinkedIn were used primarily for personal reasons. Fewer than a third of respondents had viewed an AUA social media site and 35% of physician respondents participated in a physician-only social media community. Among respondents who did not use social media the most common reasons were no perception of added value and privacy concerns.

Conclusions: Although most AUA respondents are involved in social media, they primarily use social media for personal reasons. There remains significant potential for growth and education on the usefulness of social media for urologists in the professional setting.

Key Words: urology, social media, social networking, information dissemination, questionnaires

Social media, which are virtual networks that allow for information sharing and exchange, had approximately 1.73 billion users worldwide in 2013. Social media use in urology

has expanded correspondingly.¹ To address this growing area in 2013 the AUA formed a Social Media Work Group, a subcommittee of the AUA Public Media Committee. In December 2013 our group reported the results of a 2012 survey performed by the AUA.¹ This survey was sent to a random sample of 2,000 urologists and 2,047 trainees. Of the 382 members who completed responses 74% reported having a social media account.

Since that survey, our group and others have observed an expansion in urological social media in several contexts. There has been a sharp increase in Twitter use during urological conferences around the world. Matta et al reviewed Tweets from the 2012 and 2013 AUA and CUA (Canadian Urological

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Association) Annual Meetings.² When 2013 data were compared to 2012 data, a large increase in Tweets (4,591 vs 811) and participating Twitter accounts (540 vs 134) was observed. Indeed, 2013 was the first year that the AUA used Twitter to highlight specific sessions.

Similarly Wilkinson et al recently reviewed Twitter activity in 2013 and 2012 from the EAU (European Association of Urology) Annual Congress.³ A significant increase in the number of Tweets per day (331 vs 65) was reported. Twitter use has also expanded to specialty meetings such as the World Congress of Endourology.⁴ Additionally, Thangasamy et al recently reported on the first year of the International Urology Journal Club using Twitter.⁵ Overall there were 189 participants from a total of 19 countries with more than 1,000 followers within the first 12 months of activity.

There has also been increased social media interaction with the AUA. From May 2013 to May 2014 the number of Facebook fans increased from 4,305 to 9,017 and the number of Twitter followers increased from 2,958 to 4,863. Figure 1 shows examples of AUA social media pages.

In light of these temporal trends our work group decided to perform a larger, more comprehensive evaluation of social media use in the urological community. In particular, we sought to obtain updated information on factors associated with the use of different social media platforms as well as reasons for continued nonuse.

Material and Methods

To assess current social media use by AUA members we created a survey including 20 closed-ended and 1 open-ended question (supplementary Appendix, <http://www.urologypracticejournal.com/>). An initial invitation was sent to all AUA members with

a valid email address on November 14, 2013. Three additional email reminders were sent to members who had not yet completed the questionnaire before the survey closed on December 9, 2013. Survey responses were tallied at the AUA. For questions about reasons for use more than 1 response was allowed.

Descriptive statistics were used to characterize social media use and the Z-test of proportions was applied to compare use patterns between groups. Confidence levels were also calculated to provide the probability that a difference at least as large would have occurred by chance if the 2 population proportions had in fact been equal. Significance testing was performed on each proportional difference or percent with $p < 0.05$ considered statistically significant. Statistical analysis was done with DataStar (<http://www.surveystar.com>).

Results

Of the 16,376 invitations 1,114 surveys were completed for a response rate of 6.8%. Of the 1,114 members who completed the survey 88% were male, which was similar to the distribution of the overall AUA membership (table 1). Of the participants 60% were 11 years or more out of residency, 65% lived in the United States and 76% practiced in an urban setting. The largest proportion of respondents specialized in general urology (63%), followed by oncology (32%), stones (22%), incontinence (14%), erectile dysfunction (13%) and pediatrics (10%). Most respondents were in a single urology group (25%), a full-time academic (22%), at a hospital (20%), in a multispecialty group (13%) or in solo practice (10%). Compared to the overall AUA membership significantly fewer respondents were 65 years old or older (table 1).

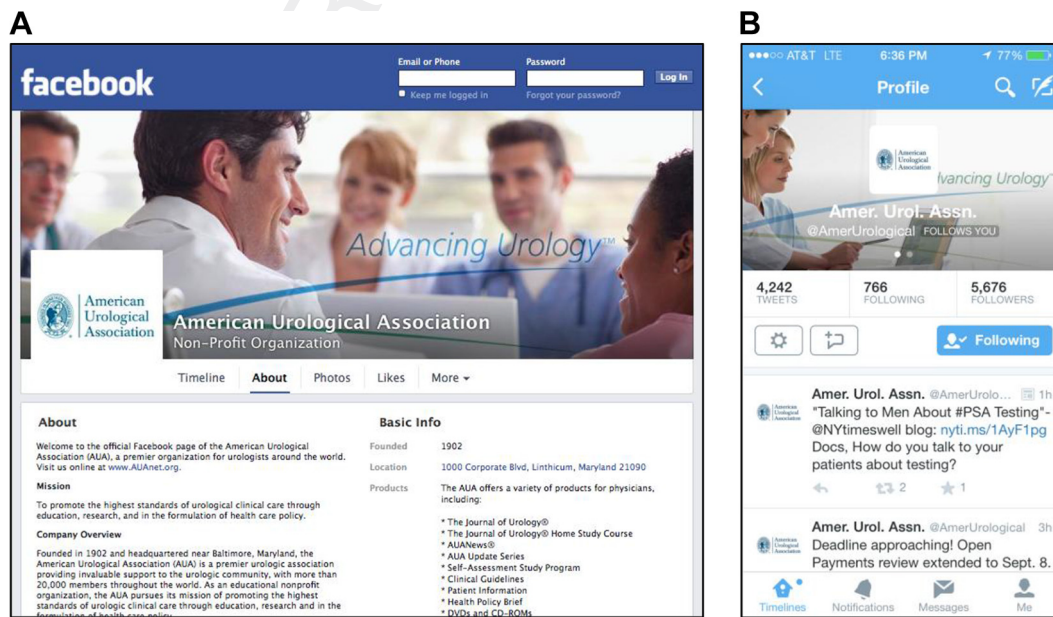


Figure 1. Screen captures of AUA social media presence. A, Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/AmerUrological>) on standard Internet browser. B, Twitter page (@AmerUrological) on standard smartphone via downloadable Twitter app.

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