

Medical Journals in the Age of Ubiquitous Social Media

N. Seth Trueger, MD, MPH

Abstract

Medical journals increasingly use social media to engage their audiences in a variety of ways, from simply broadcasting content via blogs, microblogs, and podcasts to more interactive methods such as Twitter chats and online journal clubs. Online discussion may increase readership and help improve peer review, for example, by providing postpublication peer review. Challenges remain, including the loss of nuance and context of shared work. Furthermore, uncertainty remains regarding how to assess the impact of journal social media outreach, abundant but unclear metrics, and the magnitude of benefit (if any), particularly given the substantial work required for substantive interactive engagement. Continued involvement and innovation from medical journals through social media offers potential in engaging journal audiences and improving knowledge translation.

Key Words: Social media, journal publishing, knowledge translation

J Am Coll Radiol 2017;■:■-■. Copyright © 2017 American College of Radiology

As the use of social media continues to increase among health professionals, it is no surprise that medical journals have joined in. After all, medical journals are edited, reviewed, written, and (hopefully) read by physicians. Journals in many specialties have participated in social media in a variety of ways, to various degrees. Many journals simply broadcast new publications on their feeds. Others have taken more aggressive steps, including blogs, podcasts, online journal clubs, and Twitter chats; some journals take the “meta” step of publishing articles about physicians’ social media use, which are often then shared to great acclaim on social media [1].

Participating in social media offers journals a number of benefits, from simple self-promotion and improvement of journal metrics (page views [1-3], citations [4,5], Impact Factor [6], and altmetrics [7]) to potentially serving as a lever to increase knowledge translation, which, after all, should be journals’ ultimate goal. At the simplest level, journals can use social media to raise awareness and perhaps readership of their content.

Furthermore, journals may be able to improve the scientific process from start to finish. Social media participation may improve the peer-review process as new research findings are often disseminated and discussed online. Although this is perhaps most identifiable and prevalent in postpublication peer review (discussed later), social media does offer ways to improve research in progress. Conference presenters and attendees share preliminary findings from their poster and abstract sessions, potentially generating meaningful community feedback while projects are still in development, honing projects into better products. Sharing preliminary work on social media may expand the pool of peers and experts discussing works in progress. In one extreme example, Rosie Redfield live-blogged her microbiology research, fostering peer review contemporaneously with experiment, before publishing in more traditional routes [8].

More importantly, online discussion acts as postpublication peer review. Notable articles can generate substantial online chatter, including discussion on Twitter and sometimes extensive blog posts. Of course, postpublication peer review is nothing new; journals have long printed letters and authors’ responses, but at a much slower pace; and, although traditional postpublication peer review is typically more polite, the price is often ambiguity [9]. Online, however, a number of physicians who excel at critical appraisal share their views with the

Department of Emergency Medicine, Northwestern University, Chicago, Illinois.

Corresponding author and reprints: N. Seth Trueger, MD, MPH, Department of Emergency Medicine, Northwestern University, 211 E Ontario, Suite 300, Chicago, IL 60611; e-mail: ntrueger@gmail.com.

Dr Trueger receives a stipend as social media editor for *Annals of Emergency Medicine* and *Emergency Physicians Monthly*.

community, allowing many to benefit from their analytic skills. Occasionally, online discussion around an article in press may prompt formal revisions before official publication, or even withdrawal [10]. Although postpublication peer review is not novel, it occurs online at a much faster pace than traditional journal processes; furthermore, online articles can be revised, appended, or retracted much more easily than a paper journal sitting on a shelf. Many journals participate in discussion and critique of their own articles, often through journal blogs and podcasts; some (including *Annals of Emergency Medicine*) identified independent bloggers with reputations for critical analysis and brought them in to produce podcasts. Broadcasting article analyses serves multiple purposes: first, as another broadcast stream, offering readers another avenue of exposure to new content. Next, by offering content in an alternative format, some physicians who may never actually read an article may be open to succinct audio summaries or written blog summaries. Furthermore, critical analyses may better engage an audience compared with passive reading of the primary article, adding not just evaluation but also context.

The opportunity to engage readers is arguably the most prevalent benefit for journals' online participation. Journals use social media to promote articles across multiple social media platforms, ideally increasing both the breadth and depth of their readership. Beyond simply marketing new content and sometimes triggering discussion, reader engagement may shorten the knowledge translation window. The online environment also allows a better degree of cross-specialty sharing; emergency physicians may not regularly read radiology journals, but we are exposed to new literature from colleagues in other specialties we follow online. Some journals take engagement further; for example, *JACR* often aims its monthly Twitter journal clubs at topics at the intersection of multiple specialties, such as cardiac imaging or ultrasound [11]. Engaging physicians from outside specialties may drive web traffic (ie, page views [1]), although measuring true impact (How many people actually read an article? Did it change practice?) is much more difficult to assess. Cross-specialty activities also may engage researchers and encourage submissions and solicit reviewers from outside specialties, such as emergency physicians publishing in radiology journals [12].

The transition to web-based publication coupled with online sharing on social media has begun the process of disentangling articles from journals, much as digital music weakened the link between songs and albums.

Today it seems much less important which journal an article is published in but rather whether the potential reader can access the article online [13]. Of course, the most august journals will continue to garner the most respect, but smaller specialty journals have much to gain by from online sharing. As long as authors can get their articles to readers, the need for individuals to publish in a high-Impact Factor journal is not nearly as strong as it used to be (which promotions committees are slowly acknowledging [14]). I cannot read the dozens of journals relevant to my practice. One tactic is to simply read the best journals in my specialty, perhaps by subscribing to journals' electronic tables of contents, but the quality and relevance of articles within an individual journal vary substantially. On social media, I have a community of colleagues in both similar and different practice across the globe, and I effectively crowdsource article selection, reading the most interesting, most relevant, and most discussed articles as they cross my feed—essentially a giant, customized RSS, moderated by those I follow on Twitter, delivered to me at my leisure. This works particularly well for cross-specialty topics, both clinically (eg, catheter-directed therapy or ultrasound) and in other multidisciplinary fields whose work appears in a range of journals (eg, medical education, health services research). By actively promoting their articles and engaging the online medical community, journals can improve their reach so that their articles show up on more health professionals' feeds. Increased cross-pollination may also help decrease physicians' knack for reinventing the wheel rather than learning from outside specialties [15].

SPECIFIC METHODS

Journals have a number of options for online engagement. Many journals choose to bring in physicians who already have a presence in the online community rather than trying to build their own talent. Journals need to choose which platforms to use (including Twitter [San Francisco, California] and Facebook [Menlo Park, California]); a number of tools (including Hootsuite [Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada], Buffer [San Francisco, California], and If This Then That [San Francisco, California]) can help automatically post content to multiple platforms and can also schedule content for posting. Journals must decide whether to simply use their own institutional accounts or if individuals should retain their own accounts while tweeting under the auspices of the journal. Institutional

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/8823292>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/8823292>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)