



Necessity of Rational Use of Social Media in Colorectal Surgery

Kolorektal Cerrahide Sosyal Medyanın Akılcı Kullanımının Gerekliliği

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Dear Editor;

Social media websites are web-based platforms used for computer-mediated communication.¹ In recent years, the influence of social media, and particularly of Twitter (Twitter Inc., San Francisco, USA), has become increasingly significant in surgical environments and at congresses.²

As reported by McDonald et al.¹, many academic centers and journals have been using their Twitter accounts as a modern way to present academic news, publications, and related content. For example, the account @ACPGBI, run by the Association of Coloproctology of Great Britain and Ireland (ACPGBI), informs followers about events, meetings, and current publications. Similarly, the official journal of ACPGBI, Colorectal Disease, has its own Twitter account serving the same purpose.¹

The hashtag #colorectalsurgery, created by colorectal surgeons, is one that brings together surgeons from all over the world with common areas of interest. In the first 10 weeks after the creation of this hashtag, 823 global users posted more than 5,200 tweets which were viewed about 17 million times.³ With the help of common hashtags, people with the same field of interest can be simultaneously informed about many news items and recent developments.

Until recently, the prestige of publications, authors, and journals was evaluated by their citation number, calculated using conventional citation measurement. Altmetrics were

first used for scientific publications in 2010 as an alternative to impact factors. Altmetrics can be used for measuring not only the number of citations, but also how many times an article has been viewed, downloaded, shared in social media, mentioned, and discussed.^{4,5} Therefore, even though the altmetric values of our journals and published articles are not as valuable as impact factors, they are still quite significant in this era.

From an ethical standpoint, another point which must be addressed is the obligation to respect patient confidentiality in all kinds of social media and avoid sharing unsupported and unnecessary information. We expect everyone to exercise due caution in this matter.

Besides having their official websites, our national surgical associations and journals should also create official Twitter, Facebook (Facebook Inc., California, USA) accounts and establish a YouTube channel (YouTube LLC, California, USA) and actively use these accounts to share information. This is a must for the rapid dissemination of published articles and announcements related to events, congresses and symposium, as well as for ensuring continual interaction among surgeons and interns. It may be possible to conduct journal club sessions, article hours, and online scientific discussions using common hashtags in Twitter by registering in symplur.com. These hashtags should also be used in congresses and symposiums to raise participant awareness



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and facilitate the sharing of accurate information. Rational use of social media should be encouraged in academia among surgeons and particularly surgery interns. With professional support, we estimate that the appropriate and accurate use of social media, and particularly of Twitter, will propel both our scientific societies and our journals beyond expectations and may in turn create a dynamic target audience.

Ethics

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