## *Editorial*

# SOCIAL MEDIA AND ROLE OF HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE DIRECTION

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**Abstract:**
*Health care professionals can use social media for variety of purposes. Social media has huge impact in terms of patient education, awareness buildup and patient management strategies. Global impact of social media has been undoubtedly appreciable in terms of different awareness programs. At the same time, for personal branding, social media is contributing more and more than ever. However, potential risks related to unreliable information, violation of medical ethics including patient's privacy rights should always be considered for safe use of social media and for personal safety against nations copyright act.*

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## Introduction:

Social media has fundamentally changed how the world shares and receives information and healthcare professionals are engaging in direct interaction with patients or next of kin who require opinions or updated information regarding the management and outcome of disease. [1] Social media refers to online social networking sites and is a broad example of Web 2.0, where online-based platforms are Facebook, Linked In, X (former Twitter), YouTube, TikTok, Snapchat, Reddit, Instagram, WhatsApp, Pinterest, and Personal or professional website or blogs that allows any account user to post information, which can then be shared by any other account on that platform or different platform. [2]

## Discussion:

These sites allow for unprecedented ability to connect with others from across the globe. This can be a positive force for patients as they seek information and social connections with others who understand their ordeal, particularly those with uncommon and rare conditions, and thereby increasing confidence in the doctor-patient relationship. [3] Regrettably, continuously posting the maximum volume of information all around the globe makes it impossible to institute any semblance of real-time fact-checking or verification and curation.

Therefore, misinformation and disinformation spread rapidly and easily. [4] The information can be

in the form of text, infographic content, videos, and hyperlinks to websites or other online resources. Different social networking sites allow users to create individual profiles which can be verified on payment or even fake profiles that display searchable information regarding their accounts and allow other users to find and follow them. With more than 1 billion users across the world, Facebook is the most popular social networking site. [5]

The use of social media sites has increased dramatically over the past decade with increasing access to smartphones and mobile devices, a growing majority of the population has access to these services. In the past decade, Google was the dominant search engine for information apart from Bing, Yahoo, Baidu, and Ask.com but people feel comfortable staying under one umbrella where information regarding different diseases, newsletters, management options, health care providers, and professionals can be found and at the same time they can contact either personally or with the organization. Hence Facebook and YouTube showed Super more than other social media platforms as these two platforms connect patients with healthcare providers directly or indirectly via e-mails or WhatsApp. As

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**Table-I**
*Various Types of Social Media*

| Type of Social Media | Purposes | Examples | User (Monthly Active Users - MAU) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Social Networking Sites | Connect with people | Facebook | 3.05 Billion MAU |
| | | Linkedin | 424 Million MAU |
| | | X (Twitter) | 550 Million MAU |
| | | Whats App | 2.78 Billion MAU |
| | | Sina Weibo | 599 Million MAU |
| Media Sharing Network | Share still photographs, videos, podcasts & other info graphic media | You Tube | 2.49 Billion MAU |
| | | Instagram | 2.04 Billion MAU |
| | | Snapchat | 750 Million MAU |
| | | Apple Podcasts | 28.5 Million MAU |
| | | Telegram | 800 Million MAU |
| | | Tiktok | 1.22 Billion MAU |
| Bookmarking and content curation network | Discover, share and save new content | Pinterest | 465 Million MAU |
| | | Flipboard | 145 Million MAU |
| Discussion Forums | Share news and ideas | Reddit | 430 Million MAU |
| | | Quora | 300 Million MAU |
| Consumer review network | Fine and review business | Yelp | 60 Million MAU |
| | | Trip Advisor | 400 Million MAU |
| Blogging and publishing networks | Publish content in online | Word press | 409 Million MAU |
| | | Tumblr | 135 Million MAU |
| | | Medium | 100 Million MAU |
| Health Related Website | Publish health related information, journals, videos, infographics | NIH | 220 Million MAU |
| | | Pub Med | 75 Million MAU |
| | | WebMd | 70 Million MAU |
| | | Mayo Clinic | 145 Million MAU |
| | | Health Line | 150 Million MAU |
| | | NHS | 25.8 Million MAU |

Source: Website [9,10]

society rapidly shifts towards one-stop services even on-demand home-based consultation, health care is not immune to this scenario. When people have questions regarding their health, waiting days to weeks even months to see their physician or for a long-awaited surgical opinion, different therapies are much less convenient than simply opening a web browser and typing their questions into an internet search engine where answers are prefixed and somewhat convenient. Nowadays patients can get telemedicine support via various apps on mobile phones or with the help of websites to contact healthcare providers, and counselors for advice, opinions regarding management, and different treatment plans for the same disease advised by different groups of physicians. The patient gets immediate satisfaction from their discovery of different opinions shared by physicians and direct interaction with multiple physicians for the same disease condition. In a sense, this is truly a blessing for a person living in a third-world country to have an opinion from first-world country physician without walking a single footstep from his house.

Unfortunately, most of the public does not understand internet algorithms and how they impact search results [6]. Search engines and web platforms are created by complex Artificial intelligence (AI) based algorithms. Profit is the logical sequence in all business and it is also applied in social media platforms. When a person searches for anything, he is being tracked by AI-based complex algorithms without even knowing or consent. Different paid health care providers, and social media influencers with maximum views always create target-based advertisements for their content. The information that appears at first of each person's search query is either tailored toward their choice based on previous search experience and site visits or sponsored by a third party who paid to appear first. Ultimately, when people search for health-related information online, the sites that appear first (giving the appearance of being most relevant) are not necessarily vetted or evidence-based. [7] So here comes a new term -

Misinformation. Health misinformation usually refers to information that is incorrect, inaccurate, or misleading compared with the best available evidence at that time. Misinformation causes misperception, dilutes accurate information, and can impact medical decision-making. [8] Misinformation can be spread intentionally to create a divide or personal financial gain. When spread intentionally, this is referred to as "disinformation." A person can lose trust from his physician with either misinformation or disinformation and ultimately may be maltreated under the influence of social media.

Medical professionals can easily establish a presence on social media through their accounts, YouTube channels, websites, podcasts, or blogs. The number of personal websites from health care professionals is going up each day. The world's best academic institutions and healthcare providers are also engaging with social media every day to grow up with the audience. With the actual information regarding a topic or disease, discussion about different clinical topics, creation of infographic videos, testimonials or feedback from the patient with permission, demonstration of surgical videos for educational purposes strongly creates a fan base and followers and when in need, these followers will seek help from same health care providers or medical professional thereby both parties feel the win-win situation with the help of Social Media. Actual use of social media by health care providers who share evidence-based information and perception is an imperative effort in the fight against fabricated news and misinformation. At the same time, people should cross-check pieces of information provided by different platforms before making any decision. In the past, people would take pigeons with them on journeys (for example, to war or adventure or for business), and when they wanted to send a message, they would tie it to the leg of the pigeon and the pigeon would fly to its destination or home. The person who raised the pigeon would get the message and pass it on to whomever it was intended for. Science has developed so much that at present, a mobile phone in hand can initiate a war or stop a catastrophe by rightful decision. In the future, AI based technology will be so powerful that may be, simple decisions from healthcare providers won't be necessary unless it becomes much more complicated where actual hospital admission or consultation is emergent.

## Conclusion:

Social media is a double-edged sword where both patients and healthcare providers can benefit if it has been used correctly, but at the same time, there is a potential risk of going on the wrong track if it is being in the wrong way.

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