

## Role of Social Media in the Practice of Nursing Science

Rakesh K Gorea<sup>1\*</sup>, Abhinav Gorea<sup>2</sup> and Arshdeep Gorea<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Professor Emeritus, JJT University, Rajasthan & Faculty Member, College of Medicine, Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University, Al Kharj, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

<sup>2</sup>Edith Cowan University, Perth, Australia

### Abstract

Gone are the days when meetings were held in large assembly rooms and preparations were needed to accommodate large number of people. In voluntary organizations' meetings people were compelled to participate in a face to face meeting after a much debated place to hold the meeting. Now participants do not need to worry to go to faraway places to attend the meetings, group discussions, classes, seminars and many other events. Social media have provided opportunities to actively participate in events with the comfort of a home. Social media is having a great impact on the society particularly the educated section of the society. Nursing students and nursing professionals being part of the community are also being influenced by the social media. Use of social media has both advantages and disadvantages and this fact applies equally to the nursing professionals using it. Social media has brought a tremendous revolution in communication and disseminating information to people in all the corners of the world. Social media, a big tool of communication, is increasingly becoming popular with nursing professionals but there is a need to understand that it has to be used cautiously otherwise it may bring a bad name to the nursing profession.

### Introduction

Social media is defined as constellation of internet based tools that help user to connect, collaborate and communicate with other users in real time [1]. In simple words social media is Internet-based applications for making and swapping of user generated content [2]. In the last decade there has been a revolution in the way the people are communicating through social media removing the barriers of boundaries, expenditure, time and difficulties [3].

Social media is growing at a very rapid rate and is now the mainstream communication method for most of the global population [4]. Due to technological boom, availability of the internet has increased many folds. In addition to personal computers, laptops, televisions and tablets it has even embraced our mobile phones and transformed them into smart phones.

Nursing is a profession that involves transferring of information to the patients and improving public health. Therefore a nurse should have the latest and updated information that how the social media can be utilized to achieve these ends. Social media ranges from LinkedIn, YouTube, WhatsApp, Tweeter and Facebook and its use by innovative nursing professionals has debatable advantages and disadvantages. Social media is definitely making an impact on the professional life of nursing students and this impact is going to make enduring changes in the habits of nursing students and ultimately the nursing practitioners and nursing researchers.

These days' health care systems are using social media to improve quality and safety of overall health care delivery, through access to information. Patients can also get detailed information about the diseases thorough Wikis' and many other medical blogs. According to Ferguson, "Social media allow an open dialogue between healthcare consumers and providers, allowing for continuous feedback and engagement".

One of the examples is <http://www.prestoexperts.com/health-medicine/nursing/?isLPRedirected=true> where anybody can ask information about their concerns to nursing care [5].

At any time a nurse can easily review information rather than shuffling pages of the book at the bedside of the patient (that may be outdated in a few years); the internet seems better option in which any information available can be updated by any nursing educationist or researcher.

### Advantages of Social Media

Social media acts as a platform for student nurses to communicate. Social media enables nurses to find their peers working in same field anywhere in the world and share their learning's and experiences. Meetings and conferences can be attended online which otherwise are time consuming and expensive. Social media not only helps to exchange the ideas and information but also helps in finding the jobs. When facing difficulties, social media is a good source of emotional and practical support, where professionals can share experiences with other student nurses about placements and practical experiences for solution of professional problems. Blogs are created to disseminate information by one person or by an organization and nursing students can effectively post their views and comments [2].

Nursing is considered one of the most trusted professions still they are not trusted over using social media appropriately. Most of the health organizations do not allow the use of internet for nurses and hard copy is used to get information about the drugs which is few years out of date; whereas the use of latest information can help the patient as well as the nurses [6]. The organizations like World Health Organization has a Facebook and Tweeter page to keep people informed during a disease outbreak or disaster [7]. For example WHO used tweeter during an influenza epidemic which had more than 11,700 followers [8]; this shows that it is an effective tool in making people aware of the disease and its prevention. Social media help nurses in the rural area to connect with the rest of the world with latest innovations. For example many health care organizations and professionals use social media to establish a two way dialogue with public and health care professionals like Royal College of Nurses, Australia use social media to reach members of public.

**\*Corresponding author:** Rakesh K Gorea, Professor Emeritus, JJT University, Rajasthan & Faculty Member, College of Medicine, Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University, Al Kharj, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Tel: +966580115662; E-mail: [gorea\\_r@yahoo.com](mailto:gorea_r@yahoo.com)

**Received** December 03, 2015; **Accepted** December 03, 2015; **Published** January 05, 2016

**Citation:** Gorea RK, Gorea A, Gorea A (2016) Role of Social Media in the Practice of Nursing Science. Glob J Nurs Forensic Stud 1: e102.

**Copyright:** © 2015 Gorea RK, et al. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

Moreover, nurses can also collaborate and form professional groups to carry out research works even sitting in different parts of the world. For instance, [www.researchgate.net/](http://www.researchgate.net/) is one of the social networking sites which can be used to view publications, ask and answer questions to queries of various researchers [9]. Other SNSs' [www.theconversation.com.edu](http://www.theconversation.com.edu) [10] enables academicians to publish their articles on the website which is available freely to wider audiences and allows access to discussion and debate regarding the content of the article. Moreover, it could be published and accessed quickly and easily over the SNSs. Online surveys available on various SNSs accelerate the whole process of the nursing education research. It would ultimately help the nurse lecturers to impart up to date material to students.

Social networking sites also help nurses find vacant positions quickly over the internet. Many nursing agencies are dedicated to finding and providing jobs to nurses as per requirement. For example <http://www.bowerhealthcare.com.au/> is a nurse requirement agency that is also a member of the Australian Association of Nursing Recruitment Agencies [11].

Students are enjoying the era of the internet revolution as it has eased their access to knowledge and information. Social media are used for scholarly communications and as methods of gathering, sharing and disseminating information. It provides the student nurses opportunities to ask various questions over the internet, which they sometimes hesitate to ask in front of the whole class. This also gives an additional opportunity to meet other students and teachers.

SNSs "provide unprecedented opportunities to students to share their ideas celebrate their creativity and receive immediate feedback from fellow" students [12]. Blackboard is a type of SNS which is now being intensively used by educational institutions as a means of interaction between students, teachers and management. E-libraries are also being used due to the vast availability of eBooks in the school's library. The added advantage of this system is that a large number of students can access the same book through their laptops and smart devices.

### Risks Associated with Social Media

Use of social media can pose risks to the nurses due to unprofessional behaviour and privacy violation. The information posted on the social sites is accessible to all and anyone can post the information due to which the information available is not really trustable sometimes. There are also some privacy concerns using the social media as some nurses violate patient's confidentiality by posting patient information and photographs. National Council State Board of Nursing (NCSBN) conducted the survey for the misuse of social networking, 33 state boards of nursing had received complaints about the nurses who violated patients' privacy and posted patient information on social sites. 26 of those took the action [13].

However, in the recent years, a moot question has arisen that with this liberation to write anything on SNSs, how the healthcare workers will be portrayed especially the nurses? If some 'unaccepted' post goes online, it stays there forever. Even emails stay on the servers, for the security purposes for three years, as per the European law. For instance, content on Facebook can be viewed by Google searching it and may be viewed by patients, colleagues, or employers. If patients see these 'unaccepted professional conduct' on SNSs the value of the nurses will be degraded in the society as "The profession of nursing has consistently been ranked as the most respected profession for ethics and honesty since 1999" [14]. The image of nurses portrayed on the internet can also be damaged by hackers/viruses.

Even people with limited knowledge of computer knowledge can tarnish the image completely by various means. <http://mattforney.com/destroy-someones-reputation-google/> [15]

As it is the common knowledge that potential recruiters always tend to hire decent and qualified staff. They try to find out the reputation of their employees prior to recruiting them from their contacts or even searching them on the internet. According to a recent survey by Microsoft, 75% of human resource managers and recruiters do online research about prospective job candidates by checking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, video-sharing sites, personal websites and blogs [16]. We can always search our name on search engine and see whatever content shows up. Does this information really reflect our nature? Therefore, it is now becoming a necessity to build a good online reputation.

Not always is the case that information available on SNSs is credible and can be used for the treatment of the patients. As majority of the articles written over various sites are not peer-reviewed so the authenticity of the information cannot be guaranteed. Major concerns still remain regarding the accuracy and academic rigour of this freely available content [5].

Therefore nurses should not post information of the patients on social sites. Nurses should observe online professional and personal etiquettes when they are visiting and commenting in blogs, chat rooms and public forums to avoid harm to their professional careers [17].

### Impact of Social Media

Increased availability and use of internet along with information and communication technology is changing the way the nursing professionals are communicating with each other, students with their educators and researchers in nursing professionals discussing on what to research. They have input from practicing nursing professionals who know better about the difficulties faced during practice of nursing in different fields and specialties. Social media is more useful in remote areas where other facilities are lacking [18]. For Example ICN is a place where nurses can find career opportunities for international placements and transition programs for nurses going to remote areas.

Nursing institutions and nursing programs connect with their future students as well as their current and past students. For example Facebook' is used to promote academic research by involving the past students [19]. Leaders in the nursing profession should make it a cause to work for the designing and delivery of healthcare through social media and that too with confidentiality [3]. There are social media guidelines for nursing professionals by Australian College of Nursing e.g. maintaining online confidentiality, avoiding defamation, maintaining online privacy and taking care of how the nursing professionals present themselves on social media. It holds equally true for nursing students and they should also adhere to these guidelines while communicating through social media [20].

### Conclusion

Social media has emerged as a tool of communication with the nursing professionals and is growing at a phenomenon speed. There is need to change with the altering scenario and environment of communication technology and this holds equally true for the nursing professionals. Nursing profession will lag behind if transformation in the ways of communication in the nursing profession will not progress at the pace; the technology of social media is changing. But it must be admitted that this should be done with online etiquettes and caution to minimize the risks associated with social media.

To conclude, it can be said that social media will continue to play a larger role in healthcare information and “Nurses play an important role in helping patients evaluate the veracity of online information and introducing them to reliable Internet resources.”[21]. As recommended by Australian Nursing College guidelines, nurses should not befriend patients and keep apart personal and professional communications. To prevent risk of ruining image of nursing profession and breaching confidentiality in professional environments, nurses and student nurses should use common sense and caution while communicating on social media.

## References

1. Ressler P, Glazer G (2010) Legislative: Nursing's engagement in health policy and healthcare through social media. Online J Issues Nurs 16.
2. Kaplan A, Haenlein M (2010) Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media. Bus Horiz 53: 59-68.
3. Thomas B (2013) The impact of social media in the healthcare context and its implications for the nursing profession
4. [www.worldinternetstats.com/stats.htm](http://www.worldinternetstats.com/stats.htm)
5. <http://www.prestoexperts.com/health-medicine/diet-nutrition/obesity-weight-loss>
6. Ferguson C (2013) It's time for the nursing profession to leverage social media. J Adv Nurs 69: 745-747.
7. Jones B (2011) Mixed uptake of social media among public health specialists. Bull World Health Organ 89: 784-785.
8. McNab C (2009) What social media offers to health professionals and citizens. Bull World Health Organ 87: 566.
9. [www.researchgate.net/](http://www.researchgate.net/)
10. [www.theconversation.com.edu](http://www.theconversation.com.edu)
11. <http://www.bowerhealthcare.com.au/>
12. Wheeler S, Yeomans P, Wheeler D (2008) The good, the bad and the wiki: Evaluating student-generated content for collaborative learning. Br J Educ Technol 39: 987-95.
13. Cronquist R, Spector N (2011) Nurses and social media: Regulatory concerns and guidelines. J Nurs Regul 2: 37-40.
14. Riffkin R (2014) Americans Rate Nurses Highest on Honesty, Ethical Standards. Gallup.
15. Matt Forney (2014) How to destroy someone's reputation with Google.
16. Rosen J (2010) The web means the end of forgetting. The New York Times.
17. Nurse without borders (2015) How nurses should be using social media.
18. Barry J, Hardiker N (2012) Advancing nursing practice through social media: A global perspective. Online J Issues Nurs 17: 5.
19. Amerson R (2011) Facebook: A tool for nursing education research. J Nurs Educ 50: 414-416.
20. Australian College of Nursing (2015) Social media guidelines for nurses.
21. Anderson A, Klemm P (2008) The internet: friend or foe when providing patient education? Clin J Oncol Nurs 12: 55-63.

Citation: Gorea RK, Gorea A, Gorea A (2016) Role of Social Media in the Practice of Nursing Science. Glob J Nurs Forensic Stud 1: e102.