



Knowledge, Attitude and Practice of Medical Students Towards the Use of Social Media: A Cross Sectional Study

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Abstract

Background: Social media network has drawn a lot of attention thus creating a necessity among all age groups more so ever among medical students, adolescents and younger population. **Purpose:** The purpose of this study was to examine the usage of social media among medical students. **Material and Methods:** The current observational, questionnaire-based study was conducted among 2nd prof. medical students of MBBS and BDS attending theory classes in Department of Pharmacology GMC Jammu. **Results:** It was found that majority of students (97.93%) were of the opinion that the use of social media had given information beyond books. A higher percentage of students (92.41%) thought that using social media in their respective fields has become a necessity today and 88.96% reported that it brought more creative skills in their profession. **Conclusion:** We conclude from our study that the medical students use social media to gain knowledge and to improve inter professional connection in understanding better communication.

Key Words

Medical students, Knowledge, Attitude, Practice, Social media

Introduction

Social media is a term which involves computer-based technology and promotes the idea of sharing information and thoughts by networks and communities. The use of social media through computer, tablet or smart phone, applications and web-based softwares have given a twist to the new approach of gaining knowledge (1).

In the modern era science has taken a new face because of availability of accessible knowledge from different sources like social media. The use of social media has drawn a lot of attention thus creating a necessity among all age groups more so over in adolescents and younger lot. It has established the platform of interaction, sharing experiences, easy way of communication and gaining information. Social media

has specifically created a revolution in the field of health care and has become an indispensable tool for social, capital and communication with large number of people especially young adults (2). Despite serving as an important source of information in every way, it comes with both positive and negative implications but there is no validation of information gathered from these sources.

Medical students are one such group of population who need to maintain their knowledge of medical science and adequate skills in information by becoming lifelong learners to attain the changing medical knowledge and regarding the diagnostic and treatment guidelines (3). They definitely need to use internet sources for collecting

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information regarding their field but it is very important to understand that the sources used are validated and do not provide any fake information as maximum students who use social media very often don't bother to confirm whether the information provided is right and reliable. Social media used by medical students serves as a great domain of medicine and allied health sciences thereby helping them to communicate with their fellow students regarding subject related information, discuss the curriculum and different strategies in a new dimension (4,5). Social media serves as a great domain for medicine and allied health sciences.

Thus, various issues surround the use of social media specific to medicine, its use in health care, increase in the professional development, doctor patient communication and the ethical aspects, as medical students are expected to develop some professional ethics as doctors. The correct use of social media is an important tool which can bring about a great change among medical students both in their educational and professional life which can in turn transform the communication and health care sector for enhanced and effective patient care.

As we were unable to gather a sufficient amount of data from our setup regarding the use of social media, therefore this present study was undertaken with the sole purpose to seek Knowledge, Attitude and Practice of medical students towards the use of social media.

Material and Methods

The current observational, questionnaire-based study was conducted among 2nd prof. medical students of MBBS and BDS attending theory classes in the Department of Pharmacology GMC, Jammu after getting approval by IEC. A brief description about the nature and purpose of the study was explained to the students before filling the forms. The identity of students kept confidential. A prevalidated, prestructured questionnaire designed in a vernacular language was circulated among the students of 2nd yr. and they were asked to fill it.

The questionnaire comprised of 2 sets. The first part pertained to questions based on the demographic profile of the students. The second part contained questions based on knowledge, attitude and practice towards the use of social media. Questionnaire elucidating details about various indications for the use of social media, knowledge regarding it and reasons for its uses were accessed. The questions were selected based on small surveys done among small groups of medical and dental students before commencing the current trial and the answers were taken

in yes and no and were graded accordingly

Inclusion Criteria: All students of 2nd professional MBBS and BDS who voluntarily participated in the study with complete filled forms.

Exclusion Criteria: Incomplete filled forms.

Statistical Analysis: The data was tabulated and expressed in number (N) and percentage (%).

Results

Out of total 145 participants, 82 (56.55%) were males and 63 (43.44%) were females. Age of the participants ranged from 18-23 yrs. (Table 1).

As far as knowledge regarding social media was concerned, almost all (144, 99.31%) students were aware about it. Only 1 (0.68%) female participant was not aware of social media. 97.93% of the students knew that they could gather information from social media beyond their books. Most of the participants (95.86%) had knowledge about the various medical apps available online. Majority of the students (93.10%) agreed that being on social media was time consuming and 86.89% were aware of both positive and negative impacts of using social media (Table 2).

As far as attitude was concerned, there were 92.41% of the students who had an attitude that use of social media has become a necessity in the medical field and 88.96% told that it had brought more creativity among medical professionals. Most of the students (80.68%) also agreed that the information available on social media is reliable. 84.82 % students had an attitude that social media is an important factor filling up the communication gap between doctor and patients (Table 3).

Most of the students (92.41%) agreed that the use of social media helped them to improve their academic performance as well as contributed in making learning more interesting and simplified (88.96%). The frequency of activity on social media was seen to be multiple times in 53.79% respondents and about 33.79% used social

Table 1: Demographic Profile of the Participants

Parameters	N (%)
Gender	
Male	82 (56.55%)
Female	63 (43.44%)
Age (in yrs.)	
18-20	50 (34.48%)
21-23	95 (65.51%)

Table 2: Knowledge Based Questions

Knowledge Based Questions	Yes	No
Do you know about social media?	144 (99.31%)	1 (0.68%)
Do u know social media can give you information beyond books?	142 (97.93%)	3 (2.06%)
Do you know that the use of social media has both positive and negative implications?	126 (86.89%)	19 (13.10%)
Do you know about various medical applications available on social media?	139 (95.86%)	6 (4.13%)
Do you know that being on social media can sometimes be time consuming?	135 (93.10%)	10 (6.89%)

Table 3: Attitude Based Questions

Attitude Based Questions	Yes	No
Do you think that the use of social media in medical field has become a necessity?	134 (92.41%)	11 (7.58%)
Do you think that social media has brought more creative skills among medical professionals?	129 (88.96%)	16 (11.03%)
Do you think that social media is the best medium to be popular among other fellow professionals?	119 (82.06%)	26 (17.93%)
Do you think that information from social media is totally reliable?	117 (80.68%)	28 (19.31%)
Do you think that social media affecting your life?	116 (80.0%)	29 (20.0%)
Is social media an important factor to fill the communication gap between doctor and patient?	123 (84.82%)	22 (15.17%)

Table 4: Practice Based Question

Practice Based Question	Yes	No
Has social media made you fully dependable?	124 (85.51%)	21 (14.48%)
Has social media use helped you to improve your academic performance?	134 (92.41%)	11 (7.58%)
Has social media helped you to improve your professional reputation?	124 (85.51%)	21 (14.48%)
Has social media interfered with your daily routine?	109 (75.17%)	36 (24.82%)
Do you use social media to remain updated regarding your subjects?	139 (95.86%)	6 (4.13%)
Has social media helped you to address a large audience?	115 (79.31%)	30 (20.68%)
Has social media use contributed in making learning more interesting and simplified?	129 (88.96%)	16 (11.03%)
Has the use of social media helped you in your self- learning process?	124 (85.51%)	21 (14.48%)
Frequency of activity on social media:		
Once or twice daily	49 (33.79%)	
Multiple times	78 (53.79%)	
Not everyday	13 (8.96%)	
Weekly	4 (2.75%)	
Never	1 (0.68%)	

media once or twice a day (*Table 4*).

Among the most common activities done on social media, WhatsApp (31.17%) and Google search (24.13%)

were the most frequently used sites followed by Facebook (16.55%), YouTube (15.86%) and Instagram (7.58%). The most common reasons cited by students for using

**Table 5: Common Reasons for Using Social Networking Sites**

Texting	44 (30.34%)
Provides updated information	40 (27.58%)
Easily accessible	25 (17.24%)
For educational purpose	20 (13.79%)
To stay connected with friends	15 (10.34%)

social media were texting (30.34%) followed by updated information, easy accessibility, educational purpose and easy connectivity with friends (*Table 5*).

Discussion

The use of social media in health care sector by medical professionals over the last several years has given a new platform to the landscape of modern medicine. Health care professionals have started to use social media to benefit patients, understand better communication between doctor and patients. Medical students are the most common aspirants as they began to use social media from their initial years of career to develop their professional identity which has in turn contributed in their self-learning process. Medical students need to keep their knowledge and skill up to date regarding their subjects in order to maintain their professional competence and standard of performance. This is mainly achieved through information retrieved from different sources. Social media being one of the most frequently accessed tools but the information gathered from it should be reliable and validated.

The principal finding in our study was that majority of the students (97.93%) were of the opinion that the use of social media had given them access to information beyond books which was similar to the study done by Rajendran *et al.* (6). Social network sites (SNSs) have become increasingly popular, with an estimated 80 to 90 percent of undergraduate students actively participating in such services as MySpace, Friendster and Facebook (7). More than 85% of the respondents were aware about both the positive and negative implications of social media, similar observations were seen by other authors (6,7).

We found a higher percentage of students (92.41%) thought that using social media in their respective field has become a necessity today and also 88.96% reported that it brought more creative skills in their profession. In our study it was found that students thought it to be the best medium for being popular among their follow colleagues. A lesser percentage of participants (19.31%)

believed that the information obtained from social media was not reliable, this may be due to the reason that most of the people on social media never bothered to check the facts and there has yet to be an exploration of health assessment of the reliability of health information assessed or shared through social media sites. Therefore, social media use and social networking participation continue to increase day by day, the level of trust between individuals sharing the information and individuals seeking the information should be made more reliable and more factual.

Our findings inscribed some opinion about health care as 92.41% of our students agreed that social media has helped them to improve their academic score and also their professional reputation (85.51%). Furthermore, majority of the students (79.31%) responded to use social media considering that it allows them to address a wider audience and also making them learn the course better in a more simplified way (88.96%). These observations are in accordance with other studies (8,9). Data from our study suggested that around 53.79% of students use social media frequently i.e., multiple times in a day. The major activity done on social media was chatting through text messages which contributed around 30.34%, which was similar to the output obtained from other studies (10).

Social media builds a unique source of knowledge that can inform further research and policy development in the intersection of social media and medical professionalism (11,12). This study builds on prior Pew Internet research on the growing use of search engines and mobile tools to gather information, the rise of social networks and texting, and the increasingly immersive digital world in which today's teens live (13). Therefore, so many studies needed further to focus on the credibility assessment related to health information on social media.

Conclusion

We conclude from our study that the medical students use social media to gain knowledge and to improve inter professional connection in understanding better communication. Despite believing that social media is an essential tool for acquiring information by medical students, the authenticity is still not validated. Social media is a vast subject and plenty of studies are still needed for further evaluation.

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