

IS SOCIAL MEDIA AT  
THE HEART OF MODERN  
**CRIT**ICAL CARE AND  
E**ME**RGENCY MED**IC**INE?

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# background

The early networking websites, such as Sixdegrees.com and Friends Reunited have spawned the more sophisticated descendants of Facebook and Twitter. Today it is estimated that 1.3 billion people access Facebook each month.[1]

The internet has also provided a way of disseminating up to date research and information within the world of medicine.[2] Medical education using social media has been a growing field. In late 2013, 183 websites dedicated to emergency and critical care medicine, were identified.[3]

It is estimated that there are 20000 smart phone applications associated with medical topics, with 300 dedicated to emergency medicine.[4]

The use of smartphones continues to grow with an estimated 51 million iphones sold in the first quarter of 2014.[1]

The use of social media within the workforce in critical care and emergency medicine remains unclear.

# objectives

To determine if staff, working in intensive care and emergency medicine routinely use a social media site and which sites are being used

To determine if critical care staff use a mobile phone with the potential for supporting medical applications

To determine if, and how critical care staff utilise social media for education and employment

# methods

Snapshot review of current use of social media sites, attitudes to social media use and the ownership of smartphones

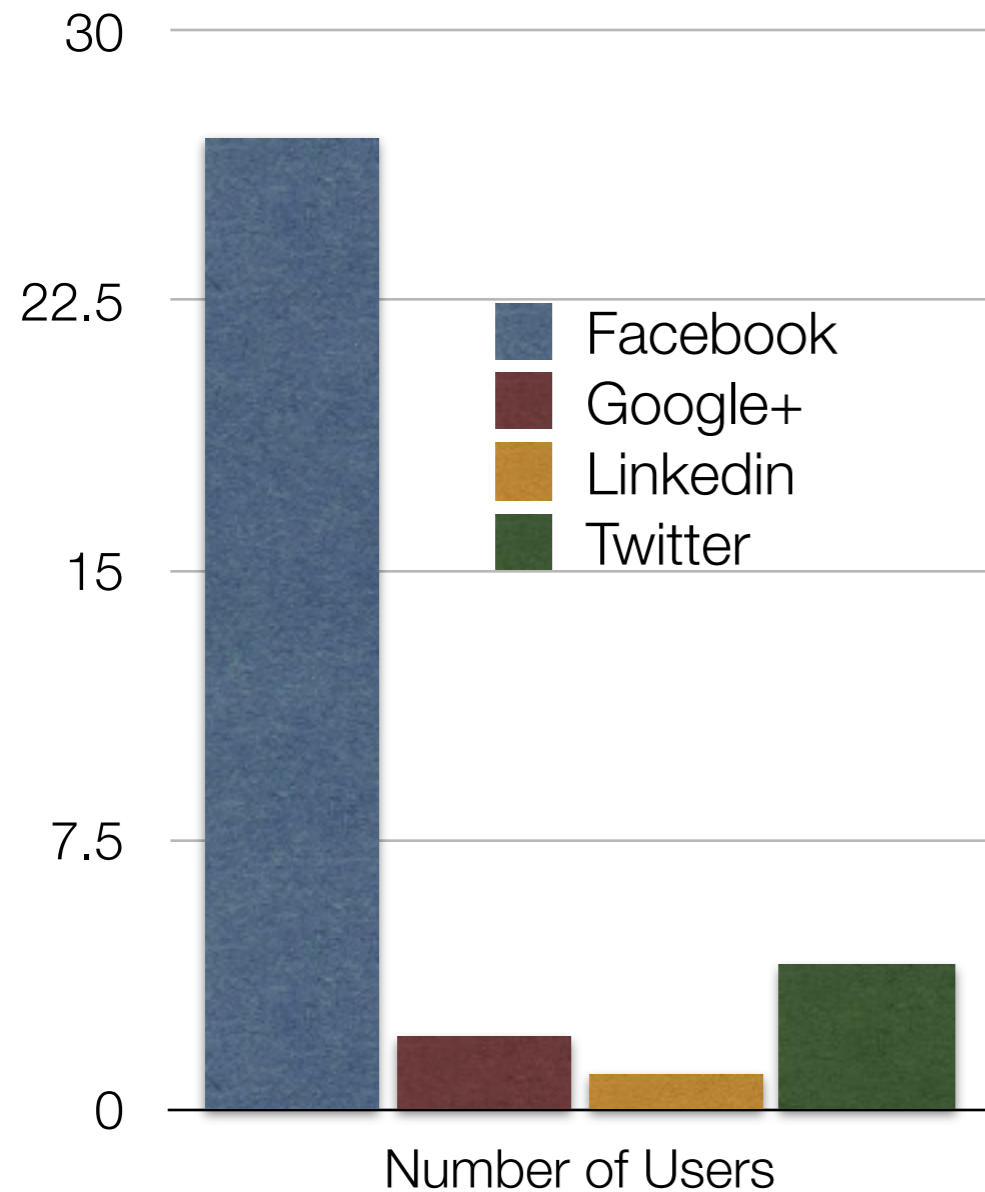
14 questions were devised to collect demographic data, usage of social media, applications of social media in critical care and smart phone use. The questionnaire was distributed to staff working in critical care

Participants were the medical and nursing staff on duty during a random day shift in November in the Emergency Department and the Intensive Care Unit of a quaternary referral centre in Sydney, Australia

It was an anonymous, voluntary, written form

Responses were collated by the authors

# results



32 completed questionnaires received

## DEMOGRAPHICS

17/32 (53%) Female

23/32 (72%) Medical staff, (9/32) 28% nursing staff

16/32 (50%) aged 18-30; 15/32 (47%) aged 31-50; 1/32(3%) aged >51

## USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA SITES OR APPS

27/32 (84%) of respondents used social media sites or apps- 13 female, 14 male

Facebook was used by all of those declaring use of social media

Twitter: 4/27

LinkedIn 1/27

Google+ :2/27

## FREQUENCY OF USE

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# results

## **REASONS FOR USING SOCIAL MEDIA SITES/APPS**

Social interaction 25/27 (81%)

Medical information/education 2/27 (19%)

## **OWNERSHIP OF A SMARTPHONE**

Yes 31/32 (97%)

Type of smartphone not specified



## **USE OF MEDICAL APPS ON A SMARTPHONE**

16/31 (52%) had 5 apps or less, 11/31 (35%) had 5-10 apps, 4/31 (13%) had over 10 apps

## **REASONS FOR USING SOCIAL MEDIA SITES/APPS**

27/31 (87%) believe social media has a role in medical education

18/31 (58%) believe social media has a role in employment

30/32 (94%) have never had an employer use social media to communicate or provide guidance

20/32 (62%) have not had their medical practice influenced by social media

Podcasts are seen as the most effective way of sharing information on social media sites (40%)

# discussion

The almost equal use of social media between the sexes reflects current trends in internet usage.

The age groups of the sample population are relevant as the 25-35 age group is the second highest age group utilising the internet. Surprisingly, this group accesses the internet more frequently for educational purposes than for social interaction. This is not supported by the reason of interaction given by our staff.

Facebook is the most popular networking site amongst the critical care workforce sampled. This is reflected globally with the 1.3 billion active users in 2013 and the 6.1 billion dollars of revenue in the same year.

Most users access social media more than once a day, usually for social interaction.

The majority of the critical care staff believe that social media has a role in medical education.

The popularity of podcasts in transferring information has lead to growing number of medical practitioners accessing popular sites such as Life in the Fast Lane, the Intensive Care Network and EMCrit.

# discussion

The majority of the sample group believed that social media may be utilised for gaining employment.

This belief is not reflected in the recruitment of the bulk of the staff as 31 of the 32 sampled were not influenced by social media in the application for their current post.

It may be that healthcare recruitment has not discovered this avenue of advertising or that it has not been found to be effective.

Given the high social network use amongst the staff, it is surprising to learn that only 2 of the respondents have ever had a communication from their employer using a social media site or app. The reasons may include a reluctance by employers to post on the personal sites of employees or that the employees do not wish any work infringement. This would be in keeping with the majority of the respondents utilising the sites for social interaction only.

The usage of social media amongst doctors and nurses is high. There are many potential areas which may utilise social media, such as formal medical education, the employment market and as an effective route of communication between employers and employees.

Larger studies of medical and nursing staff are required to assess the widespread use of social media and the implications for the workplace.

# conclusions

Social media use is high amongst medical and nursing staff

The majority of staff access social media sites or apps more than once a day

Facebook is the most popular social media site

Almost all of our respondents owned a smartphone

There are strong beliefs that social media may have roles in medical education and employment

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