

OHSU Education Symposium May 2021

Title: Social media in nursing education: Student perceptions on the use of Twitter for monitoring and disseminating health information

Goal: The aim is to engage interactively and effectively in a digital community for the purpose of sharing relevant, evidence-based public health & health information; to evaluate (discriminate) public health information that is being publically disseminated; and, to illustrate digital professionalism and expert knowledge, as nurses, in the digital community by collecting and sharing evidence-based information on key health topics within 10 weeks.

Background: According to the Woodhull studies of 1997 and 2017, the underuse of social media as a source of healthcare information by the most trusted professional group in America (Reep, 2020). Digital communication is an integral part of daily life, both at professionally and personally level. This applies to and nursing practice, where the application of technology is part of the profession. Nurses are increasingly expected to acquire and foster competencies in informatics (Remus & Kennedy, 2012). The Technologies Informatics Guiding Education Reform or TIGER Initiative is an example of nursing practice and nursing education focus on integrating digital communication and technology into practice (McBride, Tietze, & Fenton, 2013). Nurses can use social media, like Twitter, for professional development, for fostering healthy organizations and culture and for connecting to consumers of healthcare delivery including obtaining trustworthy, accurate, evidence-based healthcare information. (Jackson, Fraser & Ash, 2014).

-Nurses use social media as a means to receive support and provide support, while sharing critical knowledge to improve nursing practice (Moorly & Chinn, 2019), and thus improving patient and community health outcomes.

Twitter has made a profound effect on social media that it is now considered an important professional communication tool for clinicians, academics, researchers, educators and students (Sharp & Massey, 2018). In nursing education, it can assist faculty in helping students gain greater understanding of and/or skills in professional communication; health policy; patient privacy and ethics; and writing competencies (Schmitt, Sims-Giddons, & Booth, 2012).

Use of twitter in the virtual classroom also provides social, teaching and cognitive presence and engagement between students and between students and faculty.

Method: Students engage with the twitter community on public health topics being discussed throughout the term, and/or public health topics or health topics that are of interest to them. They are required to “follow” 40 organizations or individuals and to contribute or “Tweet” 20 posts with 10 being supported by credible evidence over a 10 week period. They present their engagement in the form of two forum posts throughout the term addressing two specific, descriptive questions directed at who they followed and why, while evaluating the information posted and applicability; and what did they contribute or Tweet, highlighting posts with evidence. The third prompt is a reflection on their experience using twitter.

Results: Data gathered from the forum posts revealed 80% had never used Twitter. 60% of students found it to be a positive experience, 20% did not state and 5% found it to be a negative experience. The themes derived from their reflections were novice user, valuable tool, use in practice, future use, use in other courses, and it added stress and anxiety, mostly related to the elections and to the pandemic. Student comments reflected the importance of engaging in Twitter for the purpose of monitoring information, disinformation and misinformation on current health topics as well providing evidence-based health information to the public and lastly on its use to improve their own practice and the nursing profession.

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