

Volume 13 - Issue 2, 2013 - Cover Story: Social Media

Social Media and Medicine

Interviewee

Dr. Bertalan Meskó

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Interviewed by

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Search for “social media and medicine” in Google, and the Social MEDia course from Webicina is the top result. Webicina founder Dr. Bertalan Meskó is an acknowledged expert on using social media in the medical field and says he is working on becoming a medical futurist. As well as Webicina, Meskó runs the medical blog Scienceroll, manages medical projects in Wikipedia, organises scientific events in Second Life and is a health 2.0 consultant for pharma and medical technology companies. In Hungary he launched the first university elective course in the world that focuses on web 2.0 and medicine for medical students – now available at Webicina.

What are Medicine 2.0/ Health 2.0 and Why are They Important?

Medicine 2.0 refers to the intersection between medical communication and social media; while health 2.0 is referring to how social media can transform healthcare delivery. Both are important trends as it is clear now that social media is changing the way medicine is practised and healthcare is delivered in many ways but still following the path of evidence-based medicine.

Are Social Media Tools for Marketing, Information, Knowledge Sharing or a Mix of These?

A mix of these, and social media is just a form of communication. It is possible to use collaboration platforms for publishing manuscripts together without geographical limitations; keeping ourselves up-to-date in our field of interest; or even building an online image for ourselves.

“Social Media is just Wasting Time. I Barely have Time to Read my Email and Keep up to Date with the Professional Literature.” What does Social Media have to Offer the Busy Doctor and Why should They Bother?

Without the meaningful use of the Internet, it is impossible now to keep yourself up-to-date. Doctors need to acquire better time management skills and social media provides plenty of solutions for this. I follow about 300 medical journals and news/blogs. By investing my time into building professional social networks around myself, they filter the web for me, saving time and effort. Social media is only useful when used with strategy and design.

E-patients use the web efficiently; the job of medical professionals is based on communication, and as social media is now an integrated part of communication, they have to deal with this.

Is There Enough ‘Critical Mass’ in Social Media to make it Worthwhile for a Radiologist to Use?

Absolutely, this is one of the most active professions in medicine online. There are plenty of blogs, community sites, Twitter channels and Youtube channels, among others..

If a Radiologist Wanted to Get Started in Social Media, What would You Suggest They Start with?

They should start with listening to those radiologists who are already active online to see what kind of platforms they have been using and how they communicate with each other.

Anyone can Start a Blog or Start Tweeting, but there are Plenty of Abandoned Accounts. How can You Focus on the Best Resources?

There are two ways to do this: 1) Learn yourself how to assess the quality of medical websites and social media resources, which takes a lot of time and effort (although it's worth it); 2) Or use services that curate medical social media resources such as Webicina.com.

Do You have Advice on How to Keep the Personal and Professional Separate on Social Media?

The same rules apply for real life as for social media. If there are things I would never do in my real life, why would I do that in the online world? For those medical professionals who would like to share personal and professional content also in social media channels, they should separate these profiles clearly. For example, when a patient sends me a friend request on Facebook, I reject it and send a private message to the patient explaining the private nature of my Facebook channel while our relationship is professional. They always understand.

Any Thoughts on Where Social Media is Heading?

It is heading to becoming even more personalised. It means e-patients will get even more information about their own conditions and be more up-to-date. Doctors have to keep up with this and acquire skills in digital literacy. This is where I have been trying to help them through university courses and a digital course (<http://thecourse.webicina.com/>).

Webicina Hosts the Social MEDIA Course on Social Media and Medicine. How much Time do You Recommend to Work Through it?

The course consists of 16 lectures with hand-outs and tests. It takes 1-1 ½ hours approximately to finish one topic, therefore, based on personal preferences, it may take between 8 and 16 hours to finish the course successfully.

Webicina Offers Curated Social Media. What Criteria do You Use to Include a Social Media Resource in the Collection?

The process of creating a particular collection is challenging and exciting as well. First, I ask those medical social networks I know the members of about their favourite social media resources focusing on a medical topic. Then my team creates a collection based on these suggestions following my 300-step algorithm after which I review again each resource. Finally, the communities of medical professionals and e-patients check the collection before publishing it officially. This process ensures we only curate the very best of medical social media resources.

How can the Radiologist Follow the Curated Webicina Radiology Collection without having to Make Frequent Visits to the Site?

This summer, we are introducing new features to the site such as the option to get personalised journals/newsletters via e-mail which can be customised based on the needs of the specific users. We hope radiologists will love and use this feature.

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