

# Social Networking and Healthcare:

## What does it mean for your practice?

PRESENTERS:  
 MARK BASTIN  
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**M**ark Bastin and Jackie Hickey gave a lively presentation on social media as it pertains to healthcare generally and wound care specifically. Bastin began his presentation by quoting the following:

“Healthcare is an incredibly collaborative sector. As such, use of social networking to foster information exchange – both inside and outside an organization – presents enormous opportunities to improve global health.”

*Jim Haughwout, Managing Partner, Oulixeus Ltd.*

Specifically, social media enables healthcare practitioners to take communication to a whole new level, where participants can engage in an interactive dialogue. This is because social networking encompasses tools that allow collaboration, two-way interaction and the sharing of text, images, audio and video. Some of the more popular tools that facilitate this collaboration include blogs, Twitter and Facebook.

With respect to social media and healthcare, software is available to help healthcare professionals connect with widespread audiences, broadcast peer-to-peer clinical recommendations, collaborate and disseminate useful patient information. One benefit of social media includes enabling organizations to support best practice in real time through living documents that can be disseminated and augmented via the internet, thereby enhancing the quality of care provided.

**Mark Bastin** is president and co-founder of Incite Performance Management.

**Jackie Hickey** is the community health advisor for Bayshore Home Health.



“Social media can provide you with new skills and resources that assist in your day-to-day practice.”



“Social networking websites offer a means of spreading information incredibly quickly.”

- peer-to-peer self-service learning;
- real-time collaboration;
- patient and caregiver support through the use of point-of-care tools (e.g. applications) that can help healthcare providers guide a patient through a process and provide peace of mind at your fingertips;
- reduced administrative hassles; and
- data-gathering for research and enhanced clinical care.

Fitting social media into the lives of healthcare professionals – specifically wound care clinicians – can be



### Questions and answers

Three questions pertain, however:

1. Where do we start?
2. How do we use social media most productively, to meet day-to-day requirements?
3. To that end, how do we produce the content that both healthcare practitioners and patients need and want?

The motivator for social media’s impact on health-

care will be the substance and relevance of the content provided. Social media should, first and foremost, link the consumer (the patient) with healthcare professionals, government, the pharmaceutical industry, the medical community and the broader patient community. This will then accomplish the following:

- peer-to-peer self-service learning;
- real-time collaboration;

*Social media can provide clinicians with new skills and resources to assist them in their day-to-day practice.*

accomplished through the following, said Bastin: "Commit to the process; develop a strategy to create a wound-care-specific social media framework. As wound care crosses so many other chronic disease states, there is a great potential to develop your own specialized knowledge base." As a result, he added, "You can create a culture of continuous quality by connecting and creating organizational 'knowledge reservoirs' and champions for specific disease states, thereby expanding knowledge to everyone while maintaining professional standards."

The long-term goal, concluded Bastin, is that social media can provide you with new skills and resources that assist in your day-to-day practice. Social media applications are the tools that can take you through the process and procedures, and provide you with the confidence and knowledge to do so.

#### Social media factoids

- Facebook tops Google for weekly web traffic in the United States.
- Social media has overtaken pornography as the number 1 activity on the internet.
- 1 in 8 couples in the US met via social media.
- To reach 50 million users:
  - it took radio 38 years;
  - it took television 13 years; and
  - it took the internet 4 years.
- Facebook added 200 million users in less than 1 year.
- A US Department of Education study found that online students outperformed those receiving face-to-face instruction.
- Around 80% of companies use social media in employee recruitment.
- YouTube is the second largest search engine in the world.
- Wikipedia has more than 15 million articles; studies have shown it to be as accurate as the Encyclopaedia Britannica.
- There are more than 200 million blogs on the internet.

Source: Social Media Revolution Socialnomics, 2011.  
Available at: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=QzZyUaQvpc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QzZyUaQvpc).

#### The professional aspect of "social" media

Hickey said, "There is a 'social' aspect to social media, but there is a strong professional aspect to it as well." Currently, the 5 major social outlets are:

- Twitter (started in 2006);
- YouTube (started in 2005);
- Facebook (started in 2004);
- LinkedIn (started in 2003); and
- Blogger (started in 1997).

Although all of these social networking websites were launched fairly recently, all have incredible power to communicate globally to a widespread audience. "With Facebook and Twitter specifically," Hickey noted, "I have the ability to communicate and connect with individuals and find out what they need, and what extra help they need."

Facebook has a variety of pages that can be created. These include personal pages to connect with family and friends, but also professional and business pages that organizations can set up to share information. "Engaging, communicating and connecting with patients, caregivers and allied healthcare professionals are the key components of these pages," Hickey said.

Social networking websites also offer a means of spreading information incredibly quickly – much quicker, she noted, than traditional media sources such as television, radio and newspapers or magazines.

In closing, Hickey offered the following practical takeaways for attendees:

- Plan to integrate social media strategically, to meet communications goals.
- Learn from others (e.g. what has and hasn't worked) and don't be afraid to ask questions.
- Build an online community and engage with others.
- Review privacy issues up front to ensure that everyone's privacy is respected.
- Jump on board and have fun! 🙌

