

#SoMe4PedSurg: social media, education, and digital innovation in pediatric surgery

B. Núñez¹, N. Álvarez¹, A.M. Casar², J.M. Campos³, E.G. Lemus⁴, K. Munanzvi⁵, J. Mayol⁶

¹Parc Taulí University Hospital. Sabadell (Spain). ²Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center (USA).

³Dr. Sotero del Río Healthcare Complex. Santiago de Chile (Chile). ⁴La Raza IMSS National Medical Center (Mexico).

⁵Harare Children's Hospital (Zimbabwe). ⁶San Carlos Clinical Hospital. Madrid (Spain).

Medical education, namely surgical education, has made significant progress in the last two decades. Medicine 2.0 gave rise to educational videos and channels, interactive online shows, podcasts, webinars, etc. These technological tools provide us with virtual education, which has become a key – and usual – component in surgical education in the 21st century.

These “novel” tools include social media, which have allowed for an exponential growth of information sharing, also in the field of science.

Twitter is gaining importance over other social media as a platform allowing intellectual, scientific, and namely medical communities to be developed. The objective of these communities is to promote an environment of collaboration, dissemination, and discussion in terms of knowledge beyond geographical barriers⁽¹⁾. It stands out as an absolutely immediate, potentially massive, global media providing a unique environment where professionals, patients, families, and associations can interact online.

In the last years, Twitter has become an extraordinary channel for medical information dissemination, promoting meetings and conferences, spreading the word about articles published in scientific journals, supporting new initiatives, developing well-established research groups such as CovidSurg[®], and giving rise to new communities with their own specific interests. This has only accelerated in the last months as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition, Twitter allows user data to be collected through surveys, and the reach and impact of all interactions to be measured by qualitatively and quantitatively analyzing a large amount of information⁽²⁾. Many online scientific publications already mention how many times

their articles have been shared on social media, apart from citations and multiple parameters.

Regarding the surgical environment *per se*, Dr. Julio Mayol, general surgeon and medical director of San Carlos Clinical Hospital in Madrid (Spain), played a vital role in this by organizing the whole worldwide surgical community on Twitter under the same hashtag: #SoMe4Surgery.

Twitter hashtags (#) are key words and phrases that can be easily tracked. This makes them prone to specific follow-up and asynchronous interaction with countless participants around the same central issue in a simple, direct, and virtually immediate fashion.

When Julio Mayol first tweeted about this global surgical movement on social media in July 2018, the idea gained immediate traction and connected all surgeons worldwide, which allowed, among others, the reach and impact of their publications to significantly increase⁽³⁾.

This is how #SoMe4Surgery was born, inherently bound to the Global Surgery movement. It was so successful that subdivisions for each surgical specialty, such as #SoMe4PedSurg (“SOcial MEDIA for PEDIatric SURGery”), were rapidly created. By adding this hashtag to your tweet – as long as it discusses pediatric surgery and is considered relevant –, when you search #SoMe4PedSurg on Twitter, you will automatically and immediately be able to access the most updated and brilliant pediatric surgery information. With a single click, you will also have a direct communication channel with the most prominent pediatric surgeons globally, such as Dr. Peña (@DrsPenaBischoff), among many others.

With the #SoMe4PedSurg hashtag, you can read, share, and/or comment with the whole pediatric surgery community globally, as well as the most recent publications and scientific breakthroughs. Indeed, Twitter allows knowledge, advice, ideas, updates, experiences, and debates to be shared with other surgeons worldwide in a quick and direct manner. It represents a true revolution in terms of knowledge acquisition and learning, especially for younger, digi-

Corresponding author: Dr. Bernardo Núñez

E-mail address: bnunez@tauli.cat

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tal native surgeons. Anything can add value to our surgical community: pictures, videos, an extraordinary or highly representative image, a clinical case, a survey, or any other format generally not available in scientific journals and other scientific media. “Visual Abstracts”⁽⁴⁾ on Twitter, which are increasingly frequent in online publications, are a clear manifestation of this, since they also contribute to dissemination and understanding by adding pictures to the text. “Global mentors” – altruistic, prominent names who aim to motivate and surgically educate at a global and selfless level by means of information sharing – are another instance of this⁽⁵⁾.

#SoMe4PedSurg reaffirms the whole global pediatric surgery community on social media. Our community consists of more than 1,600 users worldwide, mostly pediatric surgeons, but also medical students, specialist nurses, general surgeons, urologists, associations, journals, and patient families. In spite of being at an early stage, it has a huge potential, particularly as a result of two key inherent characteristics of our medical specialty: there are “few” pediatric surgeons worldwide (as compared to other specialties), and the surgical pathologies treated have a low incidence and prevalence.

In the future, only by collaborating, defining new goals, facing challenges, and connecting the whole pediatric surgery community globally will we be able to achieve meaningful change and significantly improve our pediatric surgery research, which will indirectly translate into enhanced patient care and safety.

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