

Social Media and EMSC

NEDARC Position Paper 1/4/2012

You might be wondering why NEDARC is teaching a workshop on social media and how social media can possibly be of use to the EMSC community.

Social media is here to stay and health communicators can leverage these tools to help spread accurate and timely information to the general public and other researchers. NEDARC feels that social media is one way to “get the word out” about EMSC. Our research indicates that the general public knows very little about EMSC. Of even greater concern is the number of health organizations that have never heard of EMSC. In order to more effectively create partnerships with key organizations, inform the public, and improve care for children, NEDARC believes that social media efforts should be a part of your EMSC dissemination activities.

The CDC as a Model

The CDC is a great example of a government agency using social media (<http://www.cdc.gov/socialmedia/>). They have been very successful in their efforts to reach the general public and other health care professionals through the use of social media. In the *CDC’s Social Media Toolkit*¹ they share the following important argument as to the use of social media:

Using social media tools has become an effective way to expand reach, foster engagement and **increase access to credible, science-based health messages**. Social media and other emerging communication technologies can connect millions of voices to:

- Increase the timely dissemination and potential impact of health and safety information.
- Leverage audience networks to facilitate information sharing.
- Expand reach to include broader, more diverse audiences.
- Personalize and reinforce health messages that can be more easily tailored or targeted to particular audiences.
- Facilitate interactive communication, connection and public engagement.
- Empower people to make safer and healthier decisions.

Integrating social media into health communication campaigns and activities allows health communicators to leverage social dynamics and networks to encourage participation, conversation and community – all of which can **help spread key messages and influence health decision making.**

Using Social Media for Your EMSC Program

Social media should be used as a tool to direct individuals and organizations back to an established website. EMSC Managers are encouraged to keep their website up-to-date and to use their website as the primary repository for the EMSC information for their state. They can then use social media to drive traffic to their website. Social media allows new ways of accessing EMSC target audiences that were not available at any other time.

Facebook

Facebook alone has over 800 million users with approximately half of these users logging in on any given day². Facebook allows EMSC the opportunity to interact with the general public through non-profit FAN pages which require a Facebook user to “LIKE” before viewing the content. EMSC Program Managers can use this as an opportunity to accurately disseminate information about EMSC and EMSC initiatives to members of the general public. The EMSC NRC Facebook page contains links to many publications that both researchers and the public would find interesting and informative. These individuals may not have found the EMSC NRC website any other way than through Facebook.

Twitter

Twitter has over 100 million users with approximately half of these users logging in on any given day. Approximately 250 million tweets are sent every day.³ Twitter allows EMSC Program Managers a unique opportunity to network and develop strategic partnerships with hundreds of other healthcare organizations as well as news outlets. Unlike Facebook, Twitter is by default public, meaning the information or “tweets” sent by EMSC Program Managers are available to anyone; however, you need to make an effort to ensure your tweets are read. To be effective, EMSC Program Managers are encouraged to build a network of followers by following similar organizations. This allows for more targeted information dissemination efforts. They are also encouraged to use EMSC and EMS related “hashtags” such as #emsc, #nedarc, #nemsis, #EMSCchat, or #ems. The use of these hashtags allows individuals who are listening for information related to certain topics such as emergency medicine to know that EMSC is an important player.

Twitter allows only 140 characters per tweet or message, which forces users to be succinct and is therefore a great tool for short facts or newsworthy items. EMSC Program Managers can also include links to their website. Twitter is a great tool to announce new materials or upcoming events. NEDARC has already developed partnerships with organizations previously unknown to EMSC including Dan Childs, the website manager for ABC Health News. The fact that an influential individual knows that a program exists to ensure children are treated correctly during an emergency allows EMSC new exposure and credibility.

YouTube

YouTube has created an unprecedented forum for the delivery of video content. Over 3 billion videos are viewed every day and approximately 800 million unique users visit YouTube each month.⁵ Many key healthcare organizations such as HRSA, the American Heart Association, the CDC, and the National Institutes of Health have “YouTube Channels” to disseminate accurate and timely health information to the general public.

The American Heart Association has used YouTube to help teach the general public about hands-only CPR. The video “Ken Jeong AHA Hands-Only CPR” has already been viewed 570,030 times⁵ (since June 2011), helping to spread awareness of this important emergency skill. EMSC Program Managers could use YouTube to share training videos with EMS Providers or to disseminate car seat safety videos to parents. Videos can be hidden from the public and shared with a small set of invitees if needed.

¹http://www.cdc.gov/socialmedia/Tools/guidelines/pdf/SocialMediaToolkit_BM.pdf

²<https://www.facebook.com/press/info.php?statistics>

³<http://www.cmswire.com/cms/social-business/new-twitter-statistics-reveal-100m-monthly-active-users-250m-daily-tweets-w2s-013103.php>

⁴http://www.youtube.com/t/press_statistics

⁵As of January 3rd, 2012