

Medical student perspectives on the application of social media in higher education [Response to Letter]

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Dear editor

We are glad to respond to the letter to the editor and acknowledge the interest of the readers in my publication.

As literature has rightly signaled an escalating rise in the use of social networking sites (SNSs) for social interactions, information exchange, fun, and leisure, there is a disproportionate rise in SNSs usage by university students for education. A meta-analysis has shown that although approximately 75% of the medical and health science students used SNSs for several purposes, only 20% of them used SNSs for education.¹ This study strongly stressed the need to incorporate SNSs in all instructional strategies of the medical curricula along with rigorous training of the students and academics. Probing the educational use of SNSs by the medical students, another study used the validated inventory of Social networking Sites in Medical Education and estimated the extent and nature of the use of SNSs.² This study reported that though 1181 (90%) students used SNSs, only 442/1181 (37%, $p < 0.00$) students used SNSs for education. Interestingly, a great majority of those respondents who used SNSs for education strongly recommended the incorporation of social media in curriculum for high academic performance, peer-assisted learning opportunities, and interactive reciprocal learning climate.

The concern raised by the author of letter to the editor about sensitive issues of privacy and confidentiality need attention. As detailed in my article, injudicious use of SNSs by university students is never recommended as such usage will end up with breach in confidentiality and violation of societal norms and cultural boundaries.³ As we know that the students are increasingly involved in e-learning platforms that are developed and powered by institutional support. However, all such platforms would be redundant and disabled for the students after their graduation. Consequently, they will be leaning toward other digital platforms such as SNSs for further education and connectivity. Furthermore, there is a great surge toward virtual learning across the globe and this climate can only be accomplished through sustainable digital platforms. Lastly, the impact of SNSs has been advocated by 3 Ps; permanent, powerful, and public.⁴ Consequently, using SNSs during undergraduate, postgraduate studies, and professional service will lead to life-long and permanent conventions.

The value of SNSs can only be recognized when academics and all other stakeholders are trained by well-structured faculty and students' development programs.⁵ These training programs target enhancement of skills and knowledge of new courses

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and instructional strategies. Our study advocate incorporation of SNSs for education. However, as stressed in the article, a careful use of social media should be employed under regulations by The Governance of Social Media, The Digital Millennium Copyright Act, and the Framework for Intellectual Property by global Internet fraternity.⁶ Both the use of SNSs and its regulatory framework should be implemented simultaneously by institutional administrators.

Disclosure

The authors report no conflicts of interest in this communication.

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