The growth of social media outlets has impacted the way the world connects, communicates, and learns.

Familiar platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn offer unique opportunities for professional and/or personal connections, while Snapchat, TikTok, and other platforms are gaining popularity with different ways to share.

Although social media plays a large role in how companies reach consumers, it is also used as a tool for gaining insight into population practices and infusing new ideas into the world. Vindico Medical Education has noted the medical community’s adoption of social media in a multitude of ways—from medical bloggers to physician advertisements to competitor evaluations. Utilization rates among health care providers (HCPs) remains largely understudied, but research has found that around 90% of HCPs use social media for personal reasons and approximately 65% use social media for professional purposes.¹ In that regard, social media provides continuing medical education (CME) providers with an immense opportunity to accomplish 3 goals: improve learner experience, expand reach, and drive innovation.

VINDICO MEDICAL EDUCATION’S SOCIAL MEDIA USE

by channel

**Twitter: @VindicoMedEd**
+ Most frequently used channel, with the highest audience and engagement
+ Used to share every live and web-based activity
+ Hashtags are utilized to share information about important disease states, specialty areas, and association meetings

**LinkedIn: @Vindico-Medical-Education**
+ Used to share perspectives and connect with thought leaders
+ Establish Vindico’s brand and company culture as well as share organizational accomplishments
+ Post information about new courses and live events

**Facebook: @VindicoMedEd**
+ Post similar content as to Twitter
+ Used to share the more personal voice of Vindico
+ Highlight important events and new courses

**YouTube: @VindicoMedEd**
+ Post HCP- and patient-facing content
+ Short video posts to direct the HCP audience to CME

**MedEd Talks**
+ Podcast channel available on all major podcast networks
+ Medical content designed for HCPs that may be of interest to patients
Improve Experience

With most HCPs using these interactive technologies and many using it for professional purposes, social media presents an opportunity for CME providers to gain authentic, qualitative insight from learners.

In particular, Twitter is the most popular social media platform among HCPs.² Twitter provides several benefits for the medical field. First, it allows HCPs to share new information, research, and resources. Second, it allows HCPs to learn more about the patient perspective. Because social media platforms are available to almost everyone, HCPs can experience real-time, authentic feedback from patients within their communities.

Twitter can also serve as a vetting arena for publications, as tweets frequently provide critical commentary and opinions about newly published research. Tweeting about an article is more feasible for researchers than adding a comment on an article’s website or crafting commentaries for publication. This allows readers to gain valuable insight into the perspectives and positions of HCPs and for CME providers to develop education accordingly.

Expand Reach

Social media also has the ability to reach new learners and drive increased adoption among existing audiences. Because social media platforms are open access, they create enormous opportunity for reaching new audiences on a daily basis. Providers of CME can also utilize online connection resources, such as Google Ads and retargeting, to drive targeted ads to an interested audience.
Hashtags provide organic, or unpaid, options to connect to audiences already interested in and engaging with similar content. They also provide an avenue for HCPs to share credible scientific information with an audience that they may not be directly connected (ie, friends, followers). For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, nearly one-third of US adults were skeptical of the vaccine.³ The hashtag #DoctorsSpeakUp began trending on Twitter to combat the misinformation spread online.⁴ Furthermore, initiatives like the Healthcare Hashtag Project have been specifically designed to connect patients, providers, and advocates with relevant research, conversations, and resources.⁵

During the COVID-19 pandemic, learners were using social media as an outlet to seek information about SARS-CoV-2 infection. One study found that 1 of 3 HCPs used social media to seek medical education during the COVID-19 pandemic.⁶ Indeed, in March 2020, Vindico saw a 25% increase in Twitter followers.

**Vindico Viewpoint**

**EXPAND REACH**

Vindico carefully crafts social media posts to not only engage our loyal audience but also to establish new learners to our base. One approach is to use promoted tweets during important events, such as association meetings, to drive symposia or web activity engagement in the related content area.

To connect learners with free open-access education, Vindico uses the hashtags #FreeCME and #FOAMed. Vindico uses such hashtags to connect learners with our free educational content.
Drive Innovation

Social media can be particularly useful in connecting new ideas within medical education to HCPs. This connection is extremely important and useful because clinicians can use the new information they discover from this closer contact with researchers and education providers to guide decision-making about patient treatments in an ever-evolving field. Social media creates a connection infrastructure that can exist without or with limited financial, geographical, and hierarchical challenges—any clinician can reach and engage with key opinion leaders, without the barriers of registration fees, travel, or rank.

Vindico Viewpoint

DRIVE INNOVATION

Another Vindico goal in using our social media presence is to strive to connect our learner base to influential faculty, to the latest clinical evidence, and to innovative practice solutions. We do this through hashtag and strategic postings of practice resources on appropriate social media channels.

References


For more information about this white paper or Vindico, contact:

Robert Esgro
Chief Operating Officer
resgro@vindicocme.com

Katie Robinson, PhD, CHCP
Associate Director, Medical Research and Quality Outcomes
krobinson@vindicocme.com

Tara Curran, MA
Senior Marketing Manager
tcurran@vindicocme.com

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