

The Impact of Applying Social Media in the Healthcare Industry

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Abstract— This paper shows the ways of applying social media in the health care area, and also talks about the risks that would happen when applying the social media in the same industry.

Social Media are applications and tools that allow users to contact, share, and exchange ideas and thoughts online with other users in the global using such media as, Facebook and Twitter. In fact, the contents of these applications are various such as, science, sports, health, or social phenomenon. Therefore, users can follow up or find their interests and support the information while they use these applications. According to Manhattan Research, "Use of social networking sites has grown from 8% of all adults online in 2005, to 67% in late 2012 and up to 72% of U.S. adults online in May 2013" (n.d.). On the other hand, healthcare organizations nowadays are very developed, and the processes of treatments are very fast. More than 98% of the hospitals are using technology to detect diseases and to cure them. Both social media and healthcare are developing in everyday life, and the smartest way is to combine them together to achieve more excellences and success. Indeed, gathering social media and healthcare in one place would benefit both of these tools, and result in useful output for humanity. Nowadays, the relationship between social media networking applications and hospitals is increasing. In 2009, 70% of patients used the Internet to get health information (Law, 2012). Facebook achieved the fourth place as a source of healthcare information in the United Kingdom (Dawson, 2010). Therefore, there are many uses of social media with healthcare information, which add value to reaching customer satisfaction and fast information delivery for patients in the healthcare side, and to obtain increasing of application visitors and receiving higher rates of income in social media side. In fact, the sophisticated aspects are represented in enhancing the useful functions of applying social media in this field, especially because of the weakness in the healthcare industry of providing online treatments for patients. Thus, this industry is very organized and careful with the age of patients, the side effects of using treatments, and implementing variety of ways to avoid people from contracting diseases.

WAYS OF APPLYING SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE HEALTHCARE AREA

Gathering social media tools into the healthcare industry classifies into several steps. In fact, each step has its models and classifications, so healthcare organizations should follow the rules of how to apply these tools in the hospital system, and how to find suitable tools that work with the

material. In other words, usually each department inside the hospital needs specific sets of methods that work with the department and achieve the goal (Vikram, 2010). There are some methods to use with some current examples.

Recruitments: In different companies, the recruitment departments are looking for educated and talented people that can apply the methods and raise the organization's performance (Vikram, 2010). Some healthcare providers focus on providing weekly position offers on their Facebook or Twitter accounts to find an employee who can fit the position and be qualified for the position responsibilities. Another methodology of applying social media in healthcare firms is to join LinkedIn, which is one of the most popular social media networking programs that support companies in finding applicants. Simply, after signing in, users can search about the desired position, and then the results will show a lot of resumes. Indeed, LinkedIn has several useful features, organized, specific search results, and support images and videos.

Patient Ratings: Some doctors write about their experience in the medical area in blogs or social media sites, and allow users to comment and rate them. Moreover, some hospitals have a space for patients to talk about their diseases and discuss the treatments with doctors. Technically, it is called "online treatment", where doctors help patients online. In fact, sometimes it is hard to treat patients without having them present physically, especially when doctors need blood tests or need some X-Rays. However, it is a good starting point and hopefully in the second phase, doctors can treat all the cases online. For example, according to NurseJournal.org, Sarasota Memorial Hospital is a good example about joining the social media, they have around 12,500 likes on Facebook and around 8000 followers on Twitter (NurseJournal, 2014). Therefore, it is an excellent data set that the hospital can benefit from.

Launch New Products: Releasing new medical products can be posted through the social media sites. Indeed, that can enhance the marketing process and spread the product fast to the market. Furthermore, applying some discount coupons for only users that can benefit the hospital website from increasing the number of followers and achieve high selling targets. Moreover, reading the users feedback helps other users to understand the product's advantages and recognize the details (Britnell, 2011).

Emergency Notices: Technology can be very useful to access in case of emergency. Johnson & Johnson's BabyCenter is a hospital that only takes care of mothers' and children's

health. In their website, there are several functions for pregnancy and children care, which focus on just one path of treatment. Another example, Massachusetts General Hospital, is a hospital that uses social media and blogs to locate the nearest emergency room from the current spot (Morrison & Gualtieri, 2010). Therefore, people who trust this hospital can access their account on social media to easily find an available room in case of emergency. By applying this method, the percentage of receiving patients would increase, the experience of the hospital would develop, and the annual profit would maximize.

RISKS OF APPLYING SOCIAL MEDIA TO THE HEALTHCARE INDUSTRY

Even though social media is helping patients finding the nearest available rooms and assisting hospitals to simplify the process of releasing new products. Nevertheless, focusing on another area of this helping technology can lead us to some negatives that can destroy all these benefits. In general, every technical step can have positive and negative sides, and applying social media sites in the healthcare field can cause some cons:

Inaccurate Health Information: The Internet is a global shared place that everyone has access to, and can write any information. When it comes to health, people can write many health information that are not referenced or not completed, so other patients can receive these incorrect information and apply them on a daily basis. Moreover, some people spread incorrect information and it can be more complicated to correct them (Ventola, 2014). Some patients do not understand the correct way to search for information about their health, and they just type the disease or the information that they want to know about on search engines websites. Then, they open the first link and read the content. Whether the information is correct or not, they believe that they received the answer. A current example about people receiving incorrect health information was in 2011. The Saudi Arabian society received a huge rumor about people who are putting on perfumes when they visit a patient. The rumor said that after a surgery patients can be infected from the perfumes, and this information was really popular on social media. In fact, all doctors agree that this information is not correct and perfumes do not cause any problems after-surgery patients. Until now, some people still believe this incorrect information even though all doctors disagree with them.

Privacy: Patient's health cases are very sensitive information that hospitals should keep them secure. In fact, many states in the U.S. apply the rule of getting the permission from a patient to discuss the case online or physically with other hospitals. Indeed, this is one of the patient's rights. Implementing these health cases through social media sites can be affected patients losing privacy; also it can harm a hospital's reputation. Nowadays, many countries around the world apply a solid punishment for people who discuss private health cases on social media. In 2010, a group of nurses from Tri-City Medical Center in California used Facebook to discuss patient health cases, and they got fired from the hospital (Fields, 2010).

Furthermore, the same example issue repeated in April 2011, when one physician from Westerly Hospital in Rhode Island posted a patient health case on Facebook, and the medical state fined the physician for that (Conaboy, 2011). In 1996, the United States Congress signed for establishing The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) as an organization that has many instructions about the healthcare system. One of the instructions is to refuse any hospital employees to disclose private patient cases out of the hospital (Hinmon, 2011). This organization saves the patient's rights and takes necessary actions in case of information spreading out of the hospital zone.

Trusted Resources: Despite the development results in the medical field, disagreement on some cases can happen. Some hospitals, the health information they provide depends on the study cases and researches they do within the system. However, the results on the same cases could be a little bit different in another hospital. In direct words, patients can find different kinds of treatments for the same disease from two different hospitals (Keckley, n.d.). Moreover, physicians could show a suitable treatment of a case without mentioning the age of the patient. In summary, there are several cases that can be good for infected patients unless doctors describe the treatment from all directions.

All in all, social media sites provide the chance to enhance individual and public healthcare industries. One of the most necessary aspects to successfully incorporate social media in the healthcare industry is to maintain the foundations of public trust in the medical profession. The use of social media in healthcare industry has changed the whole scenario and has positive impact on the quality and cost reduction of healthcare industry. It does not only change the quality and shape of healthcare facilities but also the shape of healthcare industry. It is observed that use of social media has changed the shape of working of whole processes in this field. It is not limited to only the doctor patient communication but it also improve the recruitment and in getting the feedback of the patients. It is stated that people are eager to post their comments on websites and other social media apps.

On the other hand these social apps are also useful for promoting the new products and inventions of new technologies in this industry. It is also important in the way that in developed countries the use of these social media is more and people are used to these social media in their lives. In this way, the publicity and issue of important notices become easy for medical technicians. On the other hand there are also involving risks of varying nature by using social media in healthcare industry. These risks involve, inaccurate health information and leakages of patient's personal information are the major risks while using social media in healthcare industry. Despite all these positive and negatives of social media in healthcare industry, it is recommended that in future, the use of social media is more important and will be on strong grounds.

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