

Strengthening the Diabetes Community: Social Media for the Dietetic Professional and People with Diabetes

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Social Media Significance to Dietetic Professionals

Most patients are going online to find answers before they ask their doctors. Using the Internet to research health is mainstream.

Patients, caregivers and family are going online to research, to gain emotional support, and feel like they belong to a group or community.

Patients are eager to share their new knowledge with others and offer emotional support. Sharing is a great way for patients to internalize new information.

Attraction of Social Media Networks for Individuals with Diabetes

Healthcare Delivery Limitations Patients may not have the time or money to see a doctor or attend an offline support group. There are challenges with insurers' networks.

Takes More than MNT to Heal Unmet emotional needs affect patient outcomes, and levels of anxiety and depression. For many patients to achieve lasting change they need a place where they feel safe to talk about what is going on in their lives. Patients are going online to gain emotional support.

Each Diabetes Patient Has a Story to Tell Diabetes is classified by the underlying cause, but the similarities in patients' lives stop there. Each patient has a different life, a different story, and different struggles. Through online storytelling patients discover who they are and what their struggles are. They can heal and manage their diabetes better when they can share their story and read other stories where they find their own meanings in.

Family & Friend Challenges A significant source of challenge in managing diabetes can be friends and family who are not willing or able to accommodate changes in diet or mealtimes.

Size Support Network Matters Research finds that the larger a person's total support network the sooner they heal and feel well and happy.

Poor Recall Patients miss a significant portion of information discussed during patient visits. Patients go online to research what they forgot.

Fear of Identify Disclosure Some patients do not feel secure in offline support groups for fear of their diagnosis getting out to their employer.

Feelings of Isolation The sense of isolation is the biggest draw for individuals with diabetes into online communities. The online social networks allow them to connect with others going through similar struggles.

Attraction of Social Media for Dietetic Professionals - WIIFM

Keep Abreast of Current Issues Find blogs, Twitter users, Facebook pages, and YouTube videos posted by professionals in the diabetes community that you enjoy reading, and provide valuable perspectives in their diabetes niche. Be sure to follow a wide spectrum in the diabetes community: manufacturers, researchers, speakers, writers and educators. Prune out any you are following that do not provide valuable information that improves your professional work.

Gain a Sense of Patient Struggles Subscribe to online diabetes communities' posts to get a real sense of patients' misinformation/misconceptions, what information connects with patients, patients' fears and struggles, and what are their biggest challenges and problems.

Increase Patient Compliance - Social support interventions have the strongest relationship with increased compliance in diabetes. Guide patients to online diabetes communities to connect with others going through the same experiences as they are.

Teach Patients to Fish Take time to sit down with patients and teach them how to go through online information and verify accuracy before acting on. Also teach them the different recognized credentials in the diabetes community. Encourage patients to bring in information they find online. Establish yourself as an expert they can refer to for guidance in the online diabetes community.

Jobs Your online presence influences recruiters' decisions. More and more recruiters

and HR professionals are turning online to view the online presence of candidates. Best practice is to Google yourself regularly and take steps to create an online presence that illustrates the outstanding dietetic professional you are.

Voice for Dietetic Professionals Working with Individuals with Diabetes – it is critical to be involved in the online community if dietetic professionals will continue to be the preferred nutrition source for consumers and patients. If we are not online participating in the conversations then in a sense we don't exist. Someone else will step in to fill our shoes.

An easy first step is to "like" DCE's Facebook page. Post comments and "likes" to comments on the DCE Facebook page. Be actively involved in the diabetes online community.

Brand Yourself Everything you do or say both online and offline adds to or subtracts to your brand as a professional - also called personal brand, and reputation. How do you serve the diabetes community? What are you known as the "go-to" person for in the diabetes community? This is your brand. Filter your involvement in social media through your brand.

Brand through Speaking Take an offline presentation and turn it into a gold mine for the diabetes community. Before the presentation blog, tweet, and post on Facebook details and ask followers what they would like to hear in your presentation. Promote the event on Eventbrite.com. Then during the presentation have organizers videotape you. Encourage participants to tweet during and after the presentation. Lastly, after the presentation share with the online diabetes community what you learned as the presenter from conversations, questions and tweets from participants. Share your slides and handouts on Slideshare.net. Post short video clips on YouTube, Vimeo.com or Blip.tv around the presentation takeaways.

Connecting Social media allows you to connect with movers and shakers in the diabetes community without traveling long distances. Through connecting and collaborating you can discover new opportunities, possibilities and ways to improve on what you do in your local diabetes community.

Facebook Best Practices

1. Facebook Business Page = Brand Page Focus your Facebook page around your brand, who are the "go-to" person for in the diabetes community.
2. Get Conversations Going Find something in common with your followers and turn it into a conversational piece and post on your Facebook wall. Ask for your followers'

input or comments. Put yourself in their shoes. What do they like to voice their opinion on? What are their daily struggles and challenges? People are on Facebook to feel good, to go away uplifted. Post positive comments after someone posts to stroke the conversation. Study the list of RD Facebook pages on this resource for how they structure postings to be conversational.

3. Get Involved in Other Conversations Be active in the online diabetes community. Post comments on other Facebook pages. DCE's Facebook page is a great place to start. Post "like" to comments and become active on other affiliate professional association Facebook pages. This helps you to brand yourself as a professional in the diabetes community and it helps the diabetes community too with valuable contributions.

4. Include a Call to Action Your Facebook page needs to tell visitors what is next. This could be including a form asking for their email address, a graphic where visitors can click to visit your website, encouragement for visitors to "like" your page, asking visitors to click on a page to get a discount, or "like" your Facebook page to get a special benefit.

5. Keep Page Updated Post at least once a week or more on your Facebook wall a comment or question to get a conversation going.

Conclusion

Make Social Media Habit Get involved in social media regularly. The best way to accomplish this is to make social media a habit through one of four options: reward yourself; setup a routine so you don't have to think about when you will spend time on social media, instead, you just automatically do it; find enjoyment in getting involved in social media; or spend time at the start of the day in social media activities to avoid procrastinating.

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RESOURCES:

Websites

Listing of Dietitians with Blogs

<http://dietitians-online.blogspot.com/p/blogroll-dietitians-and-nutrition.html>

Listing of Dietitians Online and in Social Media

http://dietitians-online.com/Online_RD.html

Nutrition Blog Network <http://nutritionblognetwork.com/> collection of blogs written by registered dietitians.

Starting Point Diabetes Communities

Information on these communities may not be screened by health professionals and is posted directly by patients. Great opportunity to teach patients how to verify information. List is not comprehensive.

DiabetesMine: <http://www.diabetesmine.com/> created by and for patients as a “diabetes newspaper with a personal twist.

dLife <http://diabetescommunity.dlife.com/> Founded by people with diabetes, for support of people with diabetes.

TuDiabetes <http://www.tudiabetes.org/> (Spanish) <http://www.estudiabetes.org/> Intended for patients with all types of diabetes, their family/friends and caregivers as well as health care professionals.

Diabetic Rockstar <http://www.diabeticrockstar.com/> Focused on “Rockstar Attitude” and creed. A “Rockstar” lives life by one’s own rules, fighting back against stereotypes, misconceptions and harassment Is not complacent and does not live by the status-quo and lives life to the fullest, realizing we are not here for a long time...

Diabetic Connect <http://www.diabeticconnect.com/> Hosted by Alliance Health a commercial entity. Online community started by Amy Tenderich of Diabetes Mine and John Crowley, whose son has diabetes.

Diabetes Daily <http://www.diabetesdaily.com/> Home of Wikibetes:
[http://wiki.diabetesdaily.com/wiki/Diabetes Guides and Tools](http://wiki.diabetesdaily.com/wiki/Diabetes_Guides_and_Tools)

Children with Diabetes <http://www.childrenwithdiabetes.com> Sponsored by Johnson & Johnson, One of the oldest, best-known, and most comprehensive diabetes online support sites_Aimed primarily at parents of children with diabetes, and their children.

Diabetes Advocates <http://www.diabetesadvocates.com> newly forming not-for-profit program that connects diabetes advocates, helps them work together, and pools their resources to help people with diabetes.

StoryTelling Non-Profit Sites

Partners and Peers for Diabetes Care <http://www.partnersandpeers.org/> website full of stories from individuals with diabetes and content is posted by health professionals as told to them by their patients. Accurate and engaging information.

Diabetes Sisters <http://www.diabetessisters.org> website for women where women with diabetes are encouraged to share their story to help others. Stories are shared on website and in print publication. Site owners are all healthcare professionals passionate about diabetes community.

Dietitian Facebook Business Pages

All examples come from different parts of the dietetic profession. The main purpose is to illustrate best practice Facebook pages where the dietitians post regularly, stroke and encourage conversations and comments (cultivating relationships with their fans).

<http://www.facebook.com/tobyamidornutrition>

<http://www.facebook.com/inspiredrd>

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Appetite-for-Health/176688752628?ref=ts>

<http://www.facebook.com/SocialRD>

<http://www.facebook.com/banisternutritionllc>

<http://www.facebook.com/SchoolMealsThatRock>

Events

RDchat – monthly conversation (first Wednesday of the month at 8 - 9pm EST) on Twitter moderated by a Registered Dietitian for people interested in food and nutrition. #RDchat <http://nutritionunplugged.com/rdchat/>

AADE Annual Meeting in August, diabetes online community program titled: The Diabetes Online Community: What the Heck is Going On?. <http://www.diabeteseducator.org/>