

Social media brings academic journals to general readers

November 14 2013

A University of Colorado Cancer Center study recently published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association: Dermatology* shows that a handful of academic journals have successfully leveraged social media to reach many times the readers of the journals themselves. But the majority of journals have yet to embrace social media and so lag behind professional organizations and patient advocacy groups in their ability to disseminate information in a culturally relevant way.

"If a [journal](#) wants to educate people, this is a way to do it," says Robert Dellavalle, MD, PhD, MSPH, investigator at the CU Cancer Center and associate professor of dermatology at the University of Colorado School of Medicine. Dellavalle also manages the Facebook page for the *Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology*.

Fittingly, Dellavalle worked on the project remotely, collaborating with a handful of medical students now included as co-authors.

The study evaluated the social media presences of 102 dermatology journals and also dermatology organizations and patient-advocacy groups. The social media followings of the most popular patient advocacy networks were about double the followings of the most popular professional organizations, which were about double the followings of the most popular journals. For example, at the time of study the Skin Cancer Foundation had 20,119 Facebook followers, the Dermatology Network had 11,251 Facebook followers, and Dellavalle's *Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology* Facebook page had 5,286 followers.

That said, "you look at the *New England Journal of Medicine* and they're getting hundreds of thousands of reads through their social media presence. They're not getting nearly that many reads on the journal itself," Dellavalle says.

The study also showed that more prominent journals tend to have stronger social media followings. "Especially in terms of Facebook followings, the journals with the highest impact factors have the most followers," Dellavalle says.

At the time of study, the *New England Journal of Medicine* had 439,022 Facebook followers. However, as good as the leading journals undoubtedly are in creating and managing social media presences, there's a steep decline in the usage and success of lesser-known journals. Of the 102 [dermatology](#) journals studied, only 12.7 percent had a Facebook presence and 13.7 percent had a Twitter presence.

"Some journals haven't recognized the potential of fully embracing popular social networks," Dellavalle says. "Even in the community of academic researchers, there's an ever-changing goal post of relevance. If you don't remain active, you fall behind the times. With continued technological evolution, organizations that fail to recognize the opportunity provided by social networking sites risk becoming marginalized by their inability to assimilate to [social media](#) as an expected form of communication."

Provided by University of Colorado Denver

Citation: Social media brings academic journals to general readers (2013, November 14)
retrieved 3 May 2024 from
<https://phys.org/news/2013-11-social-media-academic-journals-readers.html>

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