Understanding How Hospitals Use Social Media: An Exploratory Study of Facebook Posts

Submission Type: Full Paper

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Abstract

Healthcare organizations such as hospitals and clinics are increasingly embracing social media to communicate with their public audience. In line with this trend, we conducted an exploratory study to understand the major genres of posts that hospitals make on social media. We collected data on 159 Facebook posts made by five major hospitals in the U.S. Then, we thematically analyzed the content of the posts and developed a hierarchical thematic web of content. The results demonstrated that those hospitals primarily use their Facebook pages to announce and/or report on events (e.g., social, health information, charity) and organizational news, share health information, and recognize employees for their contributions and achievements. However, unlike the extant literature, we found little evidence that healthcare institutions utilize social media to recruit employees and volunteers. Our findings along with the thematic web developed in this study provide insights into the current use of social media in the health care context.

Keywords

Healthcare, hospitals, social media, Facebook, thematic analysis.

Introduction

Over the past several years, healthcare organizations such as clinics and hospitals have increasingly embarked on social media strategies, which involve establishing an organizational presence on websites like Facebook and Twitter. As of January 2015, more than 1500 hospitals in the United States actively used social media websites and maintained officially-sponsored accounts (Bennett, n.d.). For example, 93 hospitals and clinics in Texas and 119 hospitals and clinics in New York had an organizationally sponsored social media presence. Johns Hopkins Hospital, a world-class hospital in Baltimore, Maryland, has more than 245,000 users on their Facebook fan page\(^1\). Moreover, Johns Hopkins’ YouTube channel\(^2\) and Twitter page\(^3\) have more than 12,000 subscribers and 275,000 followers, respectively, from all over the world.

The use of social media by European healthcare organizations has also increased dramatically over the past several years. In 2011, more than 67% of a sample of 873 European hospitals had a Facebook account; whereas, this number in 2010 was only 10% (Van de Belt et al., 2012). This widespread adoption indicates an increased reliance on virtual environments for healthcare related publication and communication purposes.

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2. [https://www.youtube.com/user/JohnsHopkinsMedicine](https://www.youtube.com/user/JohnsHopkinsMedicine), Retrieved January 2015
Social media websites enable clinics and hospitals to: communicate directly with health consumers including patients and caregivers, disseminate information related to health and wellness (Richer et al. 2014; Griffis et al. 2014), acknowledge staff (Richer et al. 2014), promote health services and products (Bermúdez-Tamayo et al., 2010), and solicit patient opinions regarding those services and products (Griffis et al. 2014). In this way, healthcare organizations can potentially enhance their popularity and attract more patients. Moreover, by collecting reviews and comments posted by health consumers on social media platforms such as Facebook pages, healthcare organizations can assess the quality of care that they provide to their patients (Griffis et al. 2014). This enables those organizations to improve their services, which may ultimately enhance patients’ satisfaction, recruitment, and retention and result in a significant increase in organizational revenue (Wanger, 2010).

A key aspect of social media utilization in health care is the actual content disseminated by healthcare organizations. In order to establish a social media presence, an organization must first create an account or page on a social media website. They then need to decide on the type of content that they will regularly post to their website page and how frequently they will post each type of content. Some hospitals prefer to advertise for their services more frequently; some less frequently. Some hospitals utilize social media websites to provide health and wellness tips to their audience; while others utilize social media websites to announce new research activities and to solicit donations. In order to effectively utilize social media platforms and websites, healthcare organizations need to manage their activities on those websites and make sure that the content of their posts are aligned with the main objectives for which they have established a presence on social media environments.

To better understand the importance of paying attention to the content posted on social media, suppose that a hospital aims to use social media mainly for conveying health information to health consumers, but in reality they post ads related to workforce recruitment more frequently than any other types of content. This may mean that their actual use of social media is not properly aligned with their primary intent, which implies that the organization may not be leveraging social media in an effective and proper way. Thus, regular evaluation and analysis of the content of the posts seem necessary for healthcare organizations. This form of analysis can also help researchers understand the actual use of social media environments in health care. Moreover, if developers, providers, and administrators of social media websites understand what forms of content are more commonly posted by healthcare organizations, they can offer technical features, settings, and policies on their websites to better address organizations’ needs.

Despite the importance of understanding the actual content disseminated by healthcare organizations on social media environments, thus far, very few studies have focused on this matter. Thus, in the current study, we seek to fill this gap by analyzing the Facebook postings made by a sample of large, well-regarded U.S. hospitals in order to develop a thematic web of content. The findings of this study will be useful for healthcare organizations, social media providers, socially-enabled software developers, health information technology consultants, and health social media scholars and researchers.

**Literature Review**

Understanding the use of social media in the context of health care has recently become of interest to researchers in different disciplines. The primary research objectives of the studies that have focused on this emerging phenomenon have been to identify how specific hospitals and clinics utilize social media platforms (Anderson 2011; Angelle and Rose 2010), how many hospitals in different countries such as U.S. (Griffis et al. 2014), Spain (Bermudez-Tamayo et al. 2013), and Turkey (Tunceli, Hazir, and Colak 2014) use social media, what social media websites (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Yelp) are primarily used by healthcare organizations and for what purposes (Rhoads, 2012), and how adoption and utilization of social media are different across different types of hospitals (e.g., urban vs. rural or for-profit vs. non-profit) (Thaker et al. 2011; Griffis et al., 2014).

Several studies have aimed at analyzing the characteristics of the hospitals that in some way rely on social media. The findings of those studies showed that social media platforms and technologies are more likely to be used by hospitals that are large, urban, non-profit, affiliated with health systems, and have medical education missions (Thaker et al. 2011, Griffis et al. 2014, Richer et al. 2014). Accordingly, Facebook, Twitter, Foursquare, Yelp, and YouTube are the most widely adopted social media websites (Griffis et al. 2014; Richer et al. 2014; Rhoads 2012), with Facebook and Twitter being the most popular ones. For
instance, Richer et al. (2014) found that 97% and 66% of a sample of 471 U.S. hospitals had an account on Facebook and Twitter, respectively. Similarly, 99.41% of the 3371 U.S. hospitals studied by Griffis et al. (2014) used either Facebook or Twitter.

Extant literature has also investigated the primary objectives of using social media by clinics and hospitals. For example, the findings of a study on Spanish hospitals’ use of social media (Bermudez-Tamayo et al., 2013) revealed that publishing new items, educating users, creating discussion groups, maximizing community exposure, changing user behavior, and promoting specific services offered by a hospital were believed by the hospitals’ staff to be the main uses of social media in health care. Thaker et al. (2011) studied the use of social media by U.S. hospitals and found that hospitals generally used those platforms to target a general audience (97%), provide content about the entire organization (93%), announce news and events (91%), further public relations (89%), and promote health (90%).

In a survey of 36 U.S. hospitals and health systems conducted by CSC’s Global Institute for Emerging Healthcare Practices in 2012 (Rhoads 2012), the respondents were asked “For what purpose does your organization use social media?” and “What are your organization’s primary objectives in using social media?”. The top seven responses to the first question were promote wellness and healthy behaviors (58%), marketing services or products (47%), workforce recruitment (47%), consumer relations (47%), reputation management (47%), distribute educational information (47%), and brand management (44%). Also, the top six responses to the second question included engage patients/consumers (70%), build greater brand recognition (70%), attract new customers (56%), increase communication between groups (38%), recruit new staff (26%), and improve patient outcomes (23%). These results are consistent with the findings of similar research studies (e.g., Thaker et al. 2011) in that product and service marketing and relationship establishment and maintenance with patients through educating and communicating with them along with workforce recruitment are the major overarching purposes of using social media by healthcare organizations.

In spite of the fact that the intentions of leveraging social media by clinics and hospitals have been constantly studied over the past few years, little is known about the actual content and characteristics of hospitals’ postings on their pages within social media environments. Among the very few studies that have addressed that area of research, Richer et al. (2014) analyzed hospitals’ fan pages on Facebook and conducted a review of the postings by hospitals to determine which hospitals have postings related to each of the following five categories: patient education, staff discussion, staff awards, hospital awards, and consumer engagement. They found that Facebook was primarily used by hospitals for educational purposes (91%), followed by staff discussion (76%) and staff awards (63%). Nonetheless, the five categories in that study did not emerge from the data, but were considered as a-priori knowledge. Moreover, Richer et al. (2014) employed a binary coding schema to show whether or not there was at least one posting related to each of the aforementioned categories on any of the hospital’s Facebook pages. Therefore, their findings did not show what portion of the postings on each hospital’s Facebook page was related to each of the categories. For instance, having one posting related to hospital awards was coded and treated the same as having 100 postings related to that category. In order to fill those gaps and to provide further insights into the actual use of social media websites in health care in terms of the postings by U.S. hospitals on their Facebook pages, we conduct a thematic content analysis of the posts made by several United States based hospitals. The next section will discuss the method employed in this study.

Method

To better understand the types of content health care organizations place on social media websites, we collected and thematically analyzed the Facebook posts made by five prestigious United States based hospitals during the time period March 1, 2014 to April 30, 2014. We selected the institutions included in our study by reviewing U.S. News Best Hospitals 2013-2014 (n.d.) lists. These lists were developed using data collected from nearly 5000 hospitals and over 9,500 physicians to identify the top 50 United States hospitals in sixteen different health specialty categories (cancer, psychiatry, cardiology, etc.). Rankings are based on numerous factors, which include institution reputation, patient safety, perceived care quality, and death rates. Some hospitals appear on several of the sixteen specialty category lists.

From the U.S. News Best Hospitals 2013-2014 lists (n.d.), we selected the top ten institutions for each of the sixteen specialty categories, merged that data into a single list, and eliminated duplicate entries and
specialty hospitals (i.e. ophthalmologic and psychiatric institutions). This provided us with a list of 52 prestigious general medicine hospitals. Next, we searched Facebook to determine which of those hospitals maintained an institutionally-sponsored Facebook page. Forty-six hospitals had a Facebook page, but there was wide diversity in the number of likes. Following prior studies of Facebook pages (e.g., De Vries, Gensler, and Leeflang, 2012), we used the number of page likes as a proxy for the popularity of a healthcare institution on Facebook. Some hospitals’ Facebook pages had significantly greater number of likes compared to others. For instance, three institutions including Cleveland Clinic, Mayo Clinic, and Johns Hopkins Hospital had Facebook pages with 1,008,069; 517,519; and 205,115 likes respectively. Twelve hospitals had Facebook pages with low number of likes, i.e., less than 5000 likes. Those pages might have been recently initiated or not sufficiently active yet. Twenty-five institutions had Facebook pages with between 5,000 and 65,000 likes.

To ensure that we were comparing a sample of similar organizations, we chose to ignore the institutions with highly popular or slightly popular pages and focus on the middle group of hospitals, those with between 5,000 and 65,000 main page likes. Accordingly, we randomly selected five institutions from that portion of the list. The institutions included Mount Sinai Medical Center, Rush University Medical Center, Massachusetts General Hospital, Yale-New Haven Hospital, and National Jewish Health. We collected data for each institution by visiting the hospital’s Facebook page and copying all posts made between March 1, 2014 and April 30, 2014 to our data corpus. The data elements copied for each post included: post text, number of likes, number of shares, number of comments, and URLs of all linked content. The number of posts copied for each of the five hospitals was 43, 33, 33, 27, 23, respectively, yielding a total sample of 159 posts to be analyzed.

We then used thematic analysis to inductively identify patterns within the resulting data corpus. Braun and Clark (2006) describe thematic analysis as a qualitative method used to organize items, identify themes, and discover meaning within a dataset. When inductively applying the method, the identified themes come directly from the data items and are not driven by any theoretic preconceptions (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006). The method has been used in the Information Systems discipline including research studies involving online purchase decisions (Ruane and Wallace, 2013), information ethics (Fleischmann, Robbins, and Wallace, 2011), and agile team productivity and development (Melo, Cruzes, Kon, and Conradi, 2013).

Following the steps of thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clark (2006) and widely adopted in the extant literature (e.g., Rishi and Gaur, 2012; Peng and Gala, 2014), we began the analysis phase with each researcher familiarizing themselves with the data corpus and generating an initial list of theme codes. Each researcher then reviewed each data item individually and coded the item with all theme codes he/she believed to be relevant for the item. Coding was a highly iterative activity with each researcher actively updating and revising their own list of theme codes throughout the process.

Next, the researchers met face-to-face on two separate occasions to compare and discuss their individual theme code lists and the codes assigned to each data item. During the course of those discussions, the researchers shifted from applying a strict semantic lens (word meaning) when analyzing the items to a more interpretive lens (statement intent) (Boyatzis, 1998). Several iterations were made through the data with the researchers actively refining the merged list of codes and updating the coding of individual items. Once consensus was reached on item coding, the researchers reviewed the individual theme codes and grouped them based upon underlying intent similarities. The resulting information was used to develop a thematic web of content.

Results

At the end of the coding phase, 33 unique theme codes had been identified. Out of the initial 159 posts, six posts were not coded as they were cover photo changes and did not contain analyzable content. One hundred twenty-two of the remaining posts were tagged with a single theme code; 29 were tagged with two theme codes; and two posts were tagged with three theme codes.

Review, comparison, and grouping of the 33 individual theme codes resulted in a list of eleven theme categories. Posts within three of the theme categories could be further broken into multiple subcategories. Two of the individual theme codes (issue debate and non-medical product promotion) did not fit within
any of the identified theme categories. A single post was tagged with the issue debate code and two posts were tagged with the non-medical product promotion tag. The issue debate post related to the pediatric immunization issue and was also tagged with the health information theme code. The non-medical product promotion posts concerned announcements relating to t-shirt sales at a single hospital. As neither of those two theme codes was interpreted by the researchers to be of significant importance, they were grouped into a miscellaneous category which was not further analyzed. The eleven unique theme categories were then organized into four theme purpose groups which included: announcing/reporting, sharing, recognizing, and recruiting activities.

The announcing/reporting purpose group turned out to be the largest group in terms of the number of categories and subcategories as well as the number of posts belonging to the group. The announcing/reporting purpose group involved posts communicating information concerning donations, upcoming or past events, institution research activities, and organizational news. Ninety-four of the collected posts (59%) involved announcing or reporting activities. Table 1 lists the category and subcategory themes identified within the announcing/reporting purpose group and provides sample posts for each of the subcategories and categories identified within that group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Subcategory</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Example Post Excerpt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Donation</td>
<td>Monetary</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Thank you New York Rangers’ Brad Richards for your generous gift of $25,000 to support our Pediatric #Palliative Care Program!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organ</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>What does it feel like to save a life? At our #OrganDonor Appreciation Ceremony, donors shared personal stories of why they gave the #GiftOfLife.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Events</td>
<td>Charity</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>&quot;Are you a Tough Mudder? Learn how you can participate in and support the Student Veteran Society from Columbia College’s &quot;&quot;Paved in Mud&quot;&quot; campaign to benefit the Center for Veterans and Their Families at Rush.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Health</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Arthritis in your knee can make even simple daily tasks hard to complete. Join an orthopedic surgeon and rheumatologist at Rush on April 9 to learn about nonsurgical and surgical treatment options.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Screening</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Join our #HealthFair this Saturday from 10am-3pm for FREE health screenings including #HepC, #Diabetes, #BloodPressure and #Cholesterol.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>National Jewish Health and the LA Professional Services Black and White Ball Presented by Debbie &amp; Stu Steinberg and Paul Zaffaroni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Groups</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>CPAP Support Group May 10 at 10:00am in MDT National Jewish Health in Denver, Colorado</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>A research team, is investigating whether the body’s own immune system can be encouraged to mount a defense against #cancer before healthy tissue is damaged.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational</td>
<td>Facilities</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Thank you to everyone who celebrated the opening of our new #Maternal#Fetal Medicine Center and #Pediatric Specialty Center expansion at One Long Wharf in New Haven last night.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Services</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Here is the Department of Maternal-Fetal Medicine’s Photo of the Month! Our MFM specialists and registered sonographers use state-of-the-art 3D/4D ultrasounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievements</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>We got an &quot;A&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Announcing/Reporting Post
The sharing purpose group involved posts disseminating information concerning health information, health careers information, and patient success stories. Forty-four posts (28%) involved sharing information. The recognizing purpose group involved posts acknowledging employees and special days. Forty-two posts (26%) involved recognition activities. Finally, the recruiting purpose group involved posts soliciting new employees and volunteers. Only three posts (2%) involved recruiting activities. Table 2 lists the theme categories identified within the sharing, recognizing, and recruiting purpose groups and provides samples posts for each category. It is worth noting that because these three purpose groups were smaller relative to the announcing/reporting group, they are listed and detailed in one single table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme Purpose</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Example Post Excerpt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sharing</td>
<td>Health Information</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>How much fiber is on your plate? You need 25-35g/day. Rethink your #salad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Patient Success/Feel Good Stories</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Amazing story about a 3-year old who beat the odds following a failed kidney transplant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Special Days</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Everyone loves to get a thank-you note, including your doctor. You can express your gratitude by sending your doctor at Rush a thank-you eCard and making a gift in his or her honor in celebration of National Doctor’s Day, which is Sunday, March 30.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruiting</td>
<td>Volunteers</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>National Jewish Health is currently seeking volunteers who are looking for a challenging opportunity to use their retail and/or professional skills in Nan and Dollie’s Gift Shop.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Employees</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Do you want to become a part of Mount Sinai and help transform the#healthcare landscape? Register for our #Research #OpenHouse in May:<a href="http://bit.ly/1eJwZmZ">http://bit.ly/1eJwZmZ</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2: Sharing, Recognizing, & Recruiting Theme Purpose Details**

Finally, Figure 1 presents our Health Social Networking thematic web showing the relationships between the identified theme purpose groups, categories, and subcategories.
Discussion

Prior studies in the area of health social media focused primarily on the organizational staff's perceptions of the use of social media environments in the healthcare domain. In this study, we focused on the actual use of social media in this domain and thematically analyzed the Facebook posts by five major healthcare institutions in the U.S. to understand what genres of posts emerge from the posts.

The results of this study showed that hospitals primarily use their official Facebook pages to announce or report on events that are held for different purposes including but not limited to social gathering, charity and fundraising, and health screening. Accordingly, we believe the use of social media provides healthcare organizations such as hospitals with an inexpensive yet effective communication and advertisement channel to invite people to their events and to promote their organizational initiatives and programs such as fundraising and health screening. A prominent advantage of this form of informing the public audience is that all the users of a Facebook page will potentially observe the posts within a short period of time; whereas, using traditional forms of advertisements such as flyers, healthcare organizations would not be able to efficiently communicate with a large number of people to promote events and provide reports on them. Despite the fact that this theme turned out to be the most dominant theme in our dataset, several of the prior studies did not recognize it as a major use of social media in health care. For instance, the findings of Richer (2014) showed that postings related to events are not among the top five categories of the use of social media by U.S. hospitals.

Our results also demonstrated that a large percentage of the Facebook posts by healthcare institutions share professional health and wellness information, tips, and advice. This is in line with the results of the extant literature (e.g., Richer, 2014, Thaker, 2011; Rhoads, 2012) in that educating health consumers such as patients and caregivers is among the main reasons for which healthcare institutions adopt social media. Raising awareness about diseases, medications, nutrition, physical activities, and other health and wellness-related topics will not only benefit patients of the institution, but will ultimately improve the quality of life at the community, national, and global levels.
According to our results, healthcare institutions also utilize their Facebook pages to recognize and acknowledge their employees’ honors, awards, and achievements. These acknowledgements may increase employees’ satisfaction with their achievements being publicized. Moreover, by acknowledging the quality of their employees, healthcare institutions may indirectly promote the quality of care services that they provide to the public. This use of social media in the context of healthcare was also mentioned in the extant literature. For instance, Richer (2014) had found that 63% of the hospitals had made at least one posting related to staff awards on their Facebook page.

Another major theme of content that appeared in several posting by healthcare organizations was special day acknowledgement. By acknowledging special days, those organizations may aim to promote health in the society (e.g., through promoting National Walking Day), raise awareness about diseases and medical conditions (e.g., World No Tobacco Day), or acknowledge the role of people who play major roles in providing healthcare services to the community (e.g., National Doctor’s Day). Interestingly, this theme was not mentioned in several of the prior studies (e.g., Thaker, 2011; Richer, 2014) as a main purpose of using social media by healthcare organizations.

Collectively, our findings showed that in line with prior studies, educating health consumers and employee recognition are among the major themes of Facebook postings by hospitals and clinics. However, as opposed to the results of the extant literature, we found event announcement/reporting as well as special day acknowledgement to be the two primary themes emerging from the postings in this study. Another difference between our findings and the results of the related studies is that although employee and volunteer recruitment emerged as a theme in our study, only three postings of the total of 159 postings (<2%) were related to this theme. Whereas, the survey of 36 U.S. hospitals and health systems conducted by CSC’s Global Institute for Emerging Healthcare Practices in 2012 revealed that 47% of the respondents indicated that they used social media for workforce recruitment. This deviation may imply that healthcare institutions have realized that social media platforms such as Facebook are not as effective for communicating with health-related job seekers as they are for communicating with the public health consumers.

Our research findings offer several theoretical and practical implications to the area of health social media. From a theoretical standpoint, our results add to the literature on the uses of social media in health care and reveal that there are differences between healthcare institutions’ stated intentions for using social media and the content that is actually being shared. Moreover, to the best of our knowledge, this is the first study that empirically and inductively developed a hierarchical-thematic web of content of healthcare institutions’ postings on social media websites. This novel research method can further be adopted in different research areas within the information systems domain.

From a practical point of view, our results demonstrated that major hospitals use social media platforms primarily for educating patients on health and wellness topics, announcing and reporting on different types of events, and recognizing employees. These results can be used as a benchmark for the healthcare institutions that want to establish a social media presence to communicate with the public audience and for the smaller clinics and hospitals that want to further expand and improve their activities on social media websites. For instance, the hospitals with lower levels of popularity on Facebook can match their activities in terms of the theme of content posted on Facebook with those of middle-level group of hospitals. This may enable them to attract more fans to their pages and ultimately boost the dynamics of the group within those pages. Moreover, the results suggest that there might be a deviation between the initial intentions of using social media and the actual use of them by healthcare institutions. Thus, healthcare institutions may need to regularly evaluate their actual performance on social media by analyzing their postings and comparing them with what those postings were intended to convey to the audience. In this way, healthcare institutions can formulate and implement their social media strategies more effectively.

This study has limitations. For example, we collected data from the Facebook postings made by a sample of five hospitals with a middle-level of popularity on Facebook. Those hospitals and their postings may not represent the activities of all the healthcare institutions and all social media website. Further, the sample only included United States based organizations. Future studies should include data from a larger sample of international based healthcare institutions on different websites such as Twitter, YouTube,
LinkedIn and Yelp during a wider range of time. Additionally, healthcare organization types other than hospitals should be included in future samples.

Another limitation of this study is that we did not compare and contrast the hospitals in terms of the themes and sub-themes that are most dominantly used by them. In the future, researchers can also address this area by comparing the patterns and frequency of postings by healthcare organization to provide further insights into the actual use of social media environments in health care.

Conclusion

Healthcare organizations have increasingly turned to social media outlets as a new avenue to communicate with patients, employees, and the broader community. Despite this, little research to date has focused on the actual content disseminated by healthcare organizations that use social media. To address this this gap, we collected a sample of Facebook posts made by a set of large, well-regarded U.S. hospitals. We then thematically analyzed that data to develop a thematic web of content. Results of our study show that the sampled institutions heavily use social media to announce and/or report on events, share health information, and recognize employee contributions. However, contrary to prior literature, we found little evidence that health care institutions utilize social media to recruit employees and volunteers.

REFERENCES


