

The impact of Social Media in clinical practice – by Joanna Tsatsou, cancer nurse, Msc, PhDc

I have always felt some kind of attraction to the world of social media (SoMe) and I started using it from an early age. I used it primarily for personal reasons; contacting family and friends, messaging and posting pictures. Then, in 2014 when participating in the years' ESO-EONS Masterclass in Oncology Nursing, for the first time I witnessed how Twitter was used in the context of a scientific event. For example, the use of the hashtag (#) was still something new for me, as well as the creation and sharing of content based on a specific trending hashtag. Some years later, in 2017, I was chosen to participate in the EONS SoMe Workshop and had a great opportunity to meet and learn from experienced nurses about the professional use of SoMe. That was when the game changed for me. I came back home after the event, really excited, and downloaded and read the relevant literature. Actually, I was really surprised by the ways that SoMe could help us nurses in our clinical and academic work.

The first thing I noticed is how easy it is to **connect and network with other healthcare professionals and nurses** from all over the world, at any given time. Someone can ask others about clinical practice issues or guidelines or anything else by sending a simple message or even by tagging them in a conversation (e.g. a Twitter chat). That is a great way to share experiences worldwide. Practically, there are no boundaries to this knowledge sharing. In these ways, nurses also educate themselves and have access to continuing professional development, published and unpublished research and even to the content of conferences that they couldn't attend (using the hashtag of the event). For example, on Twitter, you discover the trending topic/hashtag, you create a tweet, you share others' tweets, you join the discussion and eventually you learn.

Also, through the interactions with other nurses, someone could find support not just on clinical issues but also on psychological ones, since experiences are now more easily shared on SoMe. Career development and job opportunities can also be promoted through the use of specific SoMe, such as LinkedIn, and academic achievements and research through the use of Research Gate.

Moreover, nurses can **promote their work and that of their nursing society**. Scientific research, events, webinars, congresses can all be easily promoted through SoMe and gain participants and followers. Nowadays, the visibility on SoMe and the digital imprint of a society are highly important. It is basically a sign of its own existence.

Sharing reliable information on healthcare issues to debate policy and practice issues, promoting health behaviours and engaging with the public (e.g. prevention campaigns), educating patients and caregivers, getting feedback and also educating students at an academic level, are some of the many benefits of using SoMe. Moreover, nursing managers could support their staff and nursing leaders could promote change, not only to patient care issues but also nursing administrative or educational issues (e.g. the recognition of cancer nursing in Europe, the establishment of cancer nursing speciality).

Nevertheless, we should consider that while there is such great potential with SoMe, there are also many **pitfalls**. Nurses should be really careful when using these platforms that they don't promote information of questionable value or quality, do not breach patient confidentiality, release organisational data and offend others. Remember the acronym 'THINK', before you post or repost something. Is it True, is it Helpful, is it Inspiring, is it Necessary, is it Kind ?

In conclusion, I believe that SoMe is a powerful tool for cancer nurses and that cancer nurses should incorporate it in clinical practice, with caution ...and the results might surprise them!