

VIEWPOINT

Cardiovascular Conferences and Social Media



Conference Tweeting as a Tool for Equity, Innovation, and Education

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BACKGROUND

Nearly 5 billion people use social media.¹ The use of social media platforms by physicians for professional use has changed the landscape of communication in medicine with rapid delivery of and access to information. It played and continues to play a role in accelerating innovation, expanding diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts, raising under-addressed topics, and propelling collaborations. Social media use has been accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the evolution of virtual meetings.²

One of the most prominent social media platforms in medicine is Twitter, a microblogging site with 300 to 400 million users and characterized by 280-character messages, or “tweets.”¹ One in 8 researchers use Twitter to varying extents.³ Twitter has been strategically leveraged in medicine to generate professional networks, discuss developments in different fields, and crowdsource solutions for commonly faced challenges. It has also been used to amplify research, such as covering high-impact clinical trials and research presented at major meetings and

conferences. Randomized data suggest that dissemination of articles on Twitter is associated with increased citations of publications.⁴ Similarly, approximately one-third of the scientific literature is tweeted at least once.⁵ For conferences, Twitter allows dissemination of science and information shared in real-time to a diverse audience over different time zones, with an added benefit where content continues to be discussed in real-time or in an asynchronous manner. Other benefits include note-taking for oneself (tweeting requires careful attention to distill key messages), encouraging the speakers—who may feel empowered knowing that the audience is truly listening—and educating the medical community, patients, and the public.

Conference tweeting can also be beneficial for physicians practicing in underserved areas where there is a paucity of physicians, thereby making it difficult for clinicians to attend conferences.² Not only does tweeting give them access to recent science but it also provides them with a platform for active involvement and sharing opinions and ideas, while paving the way for collaborations.² Social media also create opportunities for cardiovascular professionals and researchers to collaborate on projects based on common interests and sometimes on multidisciplinary projects with different members with different expertise. It helps them to expand their networks, and even explore future training and job opportunities. Similarly, social media can facilitate patient and public engagement, enabling patient-family organizations to gain greater footing within the cardiovascular discourse. Lastly, and importantly, the use of social media has put diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts at the forefront like never before. These platforms have become important avenues

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TABLE 1 Do's and Don'ts for Conference Tweeting

Topic	Do	Don't
Preparing for the conference	Identify the relevant hashtag(s) and handle(s) of the conference, society, speakers, and other relevant stakeholders Identify and bookmark relevant literature or media surrounding key talks	Go down a handle-searching rabbit hole during talks, losing time, and focus
Timing your tweets	Tweet as close as possible to the original talk or session Continue the discussion(s) online Declutter your mind, your notes, and your camera roll	Wait to post until talks, results, and names start to mix
Continuing to tweet	Find a regular time to tweet that works for you (eg, after every talk or session) Maintain coherence if tweeting about multiple talks or tweeting multiple posts (eg, thread) Find a formula or template to adhere to when tweeting	Tweet different talks back-to-back at the end of the day with no connection Waste (too much) time on finding the perfect quote, picture, or wording
Charging your phone (and yourself)	Ensure an accessible source of energy (eg, portable charger or plug) to charge your device(s) Take offline breaks to recharge, refuel, and hydrate	Assume your battery will last all day Remain sedentary all day and forget the in-person experience of conferences
Sharing new findings	Double-check your posts before tweeting If quoting, make sure the quote is accurate and quote the source (ie, give credit where credit is due)	Capture and share the results slides online, as results may not yet have been published Paraphrase quotes and put words in the speakers' mouth
Ethics and privacy	Read societal and conference regulations associated with social media use Listen to speakers' requests of not sharing certain information	Assume that everything presented at conferences is ethical, adheres to patient privacy, and/or should be shared online

where women physicians have united to create greater representation in regard to sex-based issues and advocacy efforts.^{6,7} Many conferences where the podium or panels were monopolized by men have been called out on social media leading to deserving women getting a chance to participate in multiple national and international conferences. Similar efforts are needed and growing for other racialized and minoritized communities. Thus, akin to Twitter's original intention to serve as a "public town square," the platform can serve as "a sounding board, megaphone, and common room" for clinicians and researchers alike.⁸

This viewpoint discusses the impact, best practices, and pitfalls of tweeting at cardiovascular conferences and highlights the role of conference tweeting as a tool for equity, innovation, and education.

HOW TO TWEET AT CONFERENCES

Conference tweeting is simple, but conference tweeting most effectively and efficiently may take some trial and error. There are several do's and don'ts you may consider during your next conference (Table 1). Moreover, when engaging with social media, one must remember the associated ethical implications, privacy concerns, and societal and/or conference regulations.⁹

BE PREPARED. Before or at the start of a conference, identify all the relevant hashtags (eg, conference- or disease-specific hashtags) and handles (ie, of the conference, society, speakers, and other relevant groups or individuals). Conference hashtags allow followers to more easily find all posts related to the conference, whereas related hashtags allow others (eg, patient advocates) to become aware of the conference and discussions, and chime in, reducing the walls of the academic ivory tower.

Additionally, you may explore relevant literature and/or media associated with keynote talks or plenary presentations. Major clinical trials or clinical guidelines may be released or discussed at the conference; linking the associated publications to your tweet allows the audience to quickly access these materials and dive deeper. Similarly, you may add to the discussion by highlighting relevant work of others or yourself.

BE TIMELY. Social media have the advantage of being asynchronous, enabling anyone to tune in at any given time. However, a timely turnaround of posts (eg, during or shortly after a talk is given) can continue discussions online, especially if there was insufficient time for questions or if nonconference participants want to engage. Moreover, often, many sessions happen simultaneously at a given meeting; thus, participants in other sessions can quickly find

out about the discussions in other conference halls/rooms.

Rapid turnaround of tweets can also reduce mental drain. Shortly after a talk, key points are still fresh in one's mind. Immediately tweeting can help unclutter one's brain, as well as one's phone (eg, list of notes) and camera roll (eg, snapshots of talk).

BE CONSISTENT. Regularly posting one or a few connected posts (eg, a mini-thread) is more efficient and effective than periodic bursts of multiple, disconnected tweets. Attention spans are limited, especially in an ever-connected world (eg, endless social media feeds) and during busy conference periods. A single poignant post can then outweigh multiple snapshots with little nuance or context. Such a process can also become a habit, streamlining your conference tweeting efforts. Finding a key formula that works for you can help standardize the process of tweeting. For example, choosing 4 key pictures (the maximum number a Twitter post allows), adding a catchy quote by the speaker, distilling the overall message into a few bullet points, and including the relevant handle(s) and hashtag(s) can craft a powerful tweet.

BE CHARGED. Social media platforms continuously seek to reduce their bandwidth despite large numbers of media (eg, pictures and videos). However, taking pictures, posting on social media, scrolling through feeds, and searching for materials online, on top of regular mobile device usage, can quickly drain batteries. Bringing a portable charger or looking for an accessible plug can prevent situations in which your phone runs out of battery when taking an important snapshot or posting a tweet. Moreover, we often use our phones for networking or transportation purposes; thus, ensuring a charged mobile device is critical.

Our mobile devices are not the only batteries that need charging. Our social batteries can quickly drain at conferences, whether as a result of networking or brain fog associated with distilling information for social media dissemination. Taking regular water breaks and sitting down for lunch is key to sustaining a healthy and enjoyable conference experience. Additionally, periodically disconnecting from social media allows you to better and more mindfully experience the conference and connect with people in person.

BE MINDFUL. Even when a post is deleted, a screenshot may already have been taken, whereas internet

archives store nearly everything. Thus, double-check your posts before tweeting, especially if quoting someone. Omitting a single word (eg, "not") can completely change a message, whereas misquoted or misinformed posts display poorly upon everyone involved. Being careful and rereading your post before tweeting takes minimal effort for maximal output.

It is recommended not to share data or results slides online, as findings presented at conferences are often not yet published. (Exceptions exist, commonly with major trials or guidelines that get a simultaneous publication.) In most cases, other slides, such as the discussion and conclusion, together with one's own summary or a quote from the speaker, suffice.

OPPORTUNITIES TO EXPAND CONFERENCE TWEETING

Societies and conference organizers can take multiple actions to further expand conference tweeting efforts.

First, dedicated social media teams composed of attendees and faculty social media ambassadors can assist with content creation and curation, participant engagement, and monitoring and analysis of social media activity. The team can interact with online audiences and assist in spreading information to a wider audience. Moreover, their network within the specialty and familiarity with the conference topics can provide an additional layer of nuanced information.

Second, social media identifiers, such as ribbons to attach to attendees' badges or social media handles added to slides and agendas, can encourage social media use. This strategy enhances recognition, motivates participants who are active on social media to engage and share their experiences, and may empower social media teams. It also encourages collaboration and networking among participants and helps to establish a sense of community. Conferences and societies may further develop Twitter guides or toolkits for conference participants ahead of the meeting to encourage social media use, for example, by more readily making conference hashtags, speaker handles, and suggested posts available.

Third, organizers can promote networking. Social media posts using the conference hashtag can be shown on walls set up in the venues. As a result, a sense of community is fostered and participants have a place to interact and make new relationships. By

establishing connections between younger and more senior participants with comparable interests and domain experience, social media can also help establish and strengthen mentor-mentee relationships. This can support career advancement and present chances for learning and development.⁷

Fourth, conferences should be customized to the needs and wishes of attendees. Social media polls and surveys can be conducted before, during, and after conferences to learn about attendees' interests and preferences. This can assist event planners in creating sessions and activities that are tailored to attendees' needs and tastes, hence boosting engagement and involvement on social media platforms and participation in future meetings. Tweets from medical conferences offer an opportunity to gain insights into trends and patterns of scientific presentations in specific specialty fields. For example, natural language processing of conference tweets can give a deeper knowledge of how conference participants are reacting to various components of the conference.

Lastly, conferences and societies may wish to promote the use of visual abstracts for ease of tweetable content and establish social media workshops, ideally led by those in the field to provide contextual insights.¹⁰

CONCLUSIONS

Social media have completely changed how medical professionals acquire and exchange information. Health care professionals have a great opportunity to interact, collaborate, and keep up with the latest developments through conference tweeting. Societies and organizers may leverage social media's potential to take conferences to the next and more equitable level, improve the conference tweeting experience, and offer beneficial chances for development, learning, and cooperation for current and future generations of cardiovascular specialists.

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