



## EDITORIAL COMMENT

## Exploring the uncharted territory of social media: the next frontier of medical education in nephrology

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### Abstract

Social media is gaining popularity amongst both medical educators and life-long learners. One of the most popular social media platforms used by the medical community is Twitter, which is popular amongst physicians, students and patients, and particularly in medical societies. Major international and regional societies commonly use Twitter to amplify their reach beyond what their live annual meetings can achieve. There has been a unique and notable effort by Nephrology societies to craft a structured social media strategy that results in the broadest reach to the community of nephrology providers. We report on the first three such experiments performed by three separate nephrology organizations.

**Key words:** education, novel, social media, technology, thanks

Social media is gaining popularity amongst both medical educators and life-long learners. One of the most popular social media platforms used by the medical community is Twitter, which allows both synchronous and asynchronous learning. Despite being dwarfed by giants such as Facebook and Instagram, Twitter's momentum in the medical world is fueled by an interface that easily brings people and groups of

various backgrounds together to discuss a common topic [1]. After mastering Twitter's unique nomenclature, one finds that it is both easy and affordable to use and effectively connects professionals at various stages of their careers, across medical specialties and distant geographic locations. These features have not only made Twitter popular amongst physicians, students and patients, but have also caught the interest of

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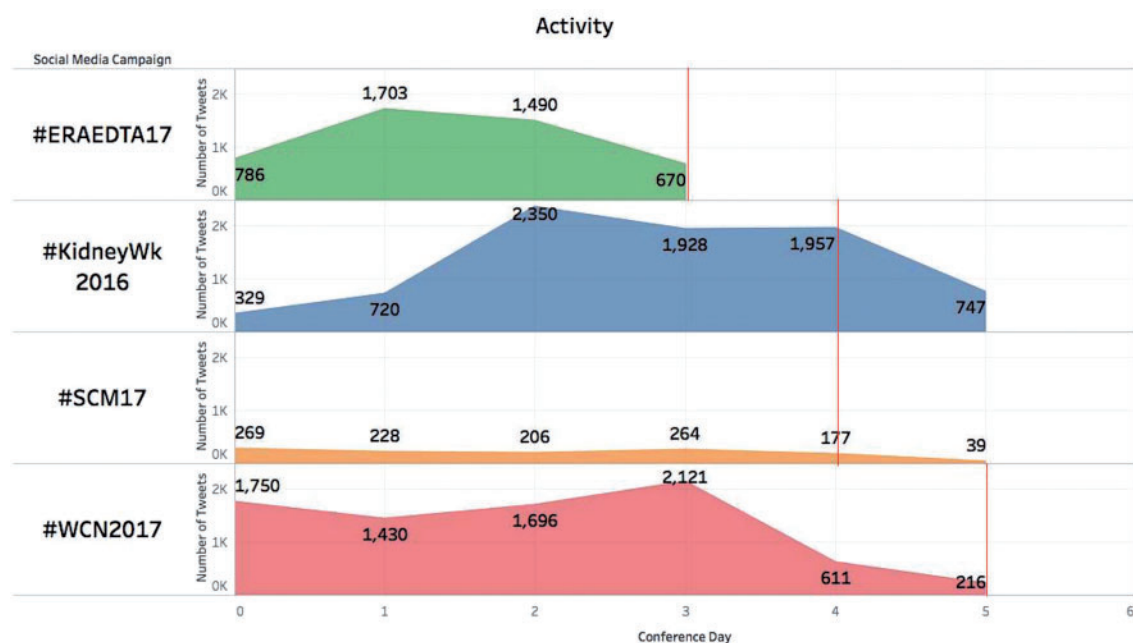


Fig. 1. Tweet activity. Red line indicates end of the campaign.

medical societies. Such societies commonly capitalize on these features during their annual medical meetings. Major international and regional societies commonly use Twitter to amplify their reach beyond what their live annual meetings can achieve. To do this, the society creates a virtual meeting room (identified by a hashtag in Twitter nomenclature) to share and debate the science that is presented at their live meeting [2]. Once created, the society simply waits until any Twitter user 'enters' into the virtual meeting room and starts a new or joins an existing conversation. Conversations can be textual, or centered around a picture or video. Nonetheless, this method is relatively unstructured, but forms the foundation for nearly every medical society's social media strategy. For some, such as the American Society of Oncology (@ASCO), this approach has yielded record-breaking participation and activity [3]. However, in most cases the virtual meeting room (hashtag) can become difficult to search or follow because conversations, pictures and videos are variably archived or catalogued [4].

There has been a unique and notable effort within Nephrology societies to craft a structured social media strategy. Since the first society-sponsored Twitter hashtag in 2011 (#KidneyWk11 by the American Society of Nephrology; @ASNonline), social media-savvy nephrologists have contemplated how best to structure a society's social media effort [5]. Six years later, the 75 society-sponsored hashtags are more than just virtual meeting rooms: they are now micro-laboratories [4]. Societies are experimenting with various social media strategies, and measuring the results in these micro-laboratories. These nephrology-led experiments are revealing solutions that will ultimately result in formulating a set of best practice guidelines for a society's social media strategy. We report on the first three experiments performed by three Nephrology organizations.

In April 2017, the National Kidney Foundation (NKF) and the International Society of Nephrology (ISN) organically and independently developed two social media strategies for their respective annual meetings. The NKF developed the Social Media Ambassadors Program, in which volunteers were asked to participate in #SCM17 (the virtual meeting room for the 5-day 2017 Spring Clinical Meeting) [6]. Volunteers were chosen based on their ability to satisfy seven criteria [6]. The ISN established the Social Media Task Force, in which recruited individuals were assigned tasks and given organizational support to participate in #WCN2017 (the virtual meeting room for the 5-day 2017 World Congress of Nephrology meeting) [7, 8]. In June 2017, The European Renal Association-European Dialysis and Transplantation Association (ERA-EDTA) and the Spanish Nephrology Society (SENeurologia) developed a third strategy in which a group of social media enthusiasts (nefrotuiteros) were assembled and asked to participate in #ERAEDTA17 (the virtual meeting room for the 4-day 2017 ERA-EDTA Congress) (<https://twitter.com/eraedta/status/869141775960682496> or <http://congresos.senefro.org/congreso2017/modules.php?name=webstructure&idwebstructure=48>).

A nephrology-focused analytics group, NOD Analytics ([goo.gl/mfziXG](http://goo.gl/mfziXG)), evaluated their respective social media strategies in three domains: activity (number of tweets), diversity (number of nations involved in the hashtag conversations) and vibrancy (percentage of tweets with a picture/video). NOD Analytics used #KidneyWk 2016 (the virtual meeting room for the 6-day 2016 Kidney Week meeting) as a comparator because no formal strategy was publicized or known to have been applied in that campaign.

These notable experiments were the first of their kind in any medical specialty and yielded promising results. Using the ISN's social media strategy, the Social Media Task Force cultivated vibrant conversations from participants in 55 nations in

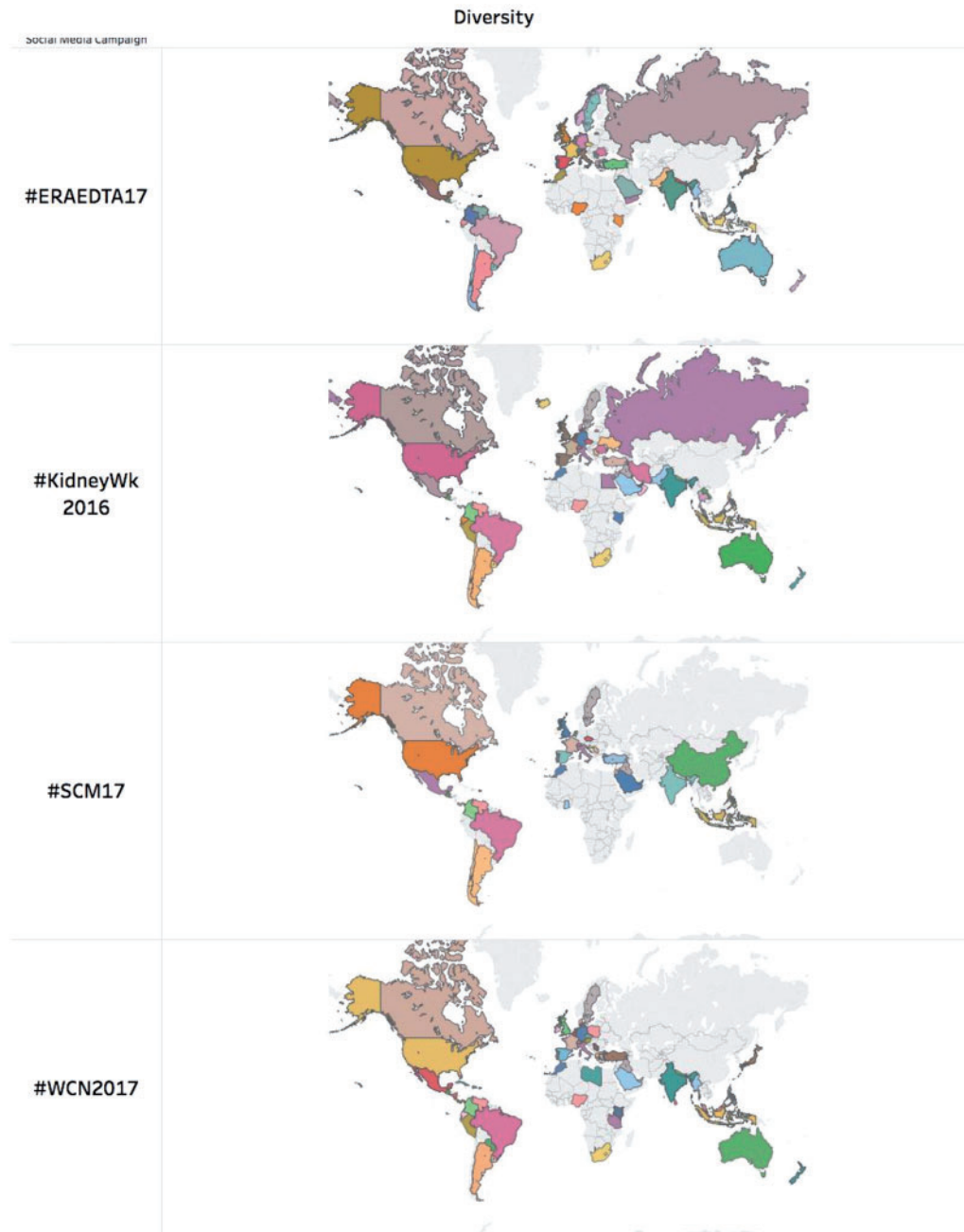


Fig. 2. Tweet diversity.

#WCN2017. Nearly half of all messages in this virtual meeting room were vibrant (43% of all tweets with a multimedia resource). More impressive was the social media strategy executed in the #ERAEDTA17 campaign. Despite being 2 days shorter than #KidneyWk 2016, it had the highest percentage of photograph containing tweets (55.2%). Equally promising was the NKF's Ambassadors Program, which had the largest percentage of video tweets (3%). Neither the ISN, NKF nor ERA-EDTA strategy yielded the greatest tweet activity, but this finding could be attributed to the shorter duration of each conference. #KidneyWk 2016 had a 1-day greater duration than

either #SCM17 or #WCN2017 and 2 days more than #ERAEDTA17. As an example, when normalized for duration, the activity from the top 5 days of #KidneyWk 2016 produced a 1% difference from the 5-day activity of #WCN2017 (Figures 1–3).

Experimenting with various social media strategies is still in its infancy. Nonetheless, the results from the ERA-EDTA, NKF and ISN are encouraging and have inspired other Nephrology societies to develop their own strategies. Indian nephrology societies have enthusiastically embraced Twitter with both the Association of Vascular Access and Interventional Renal Physicians (@AVATARorg) and the Indian Society of Nephrology customizing a unique social

**Multimedia**

Social Media Campaign	Multimedia Type		
	Multimedia Absent	Picture	Video
#ERAEDTA17	2,074 44.61%	2,566 55.19%	9 0.19%
#KidneyWk 2016	5,006 62.33%	3,001 37.36%	25 0.31%
#SCM17	625 54.63%	485 42.40%	34 2.97%
#WCN2017	4,350 57.17%	3,165 41.60%	94 1.24%

Fig. 3. Tweet vibrancy.

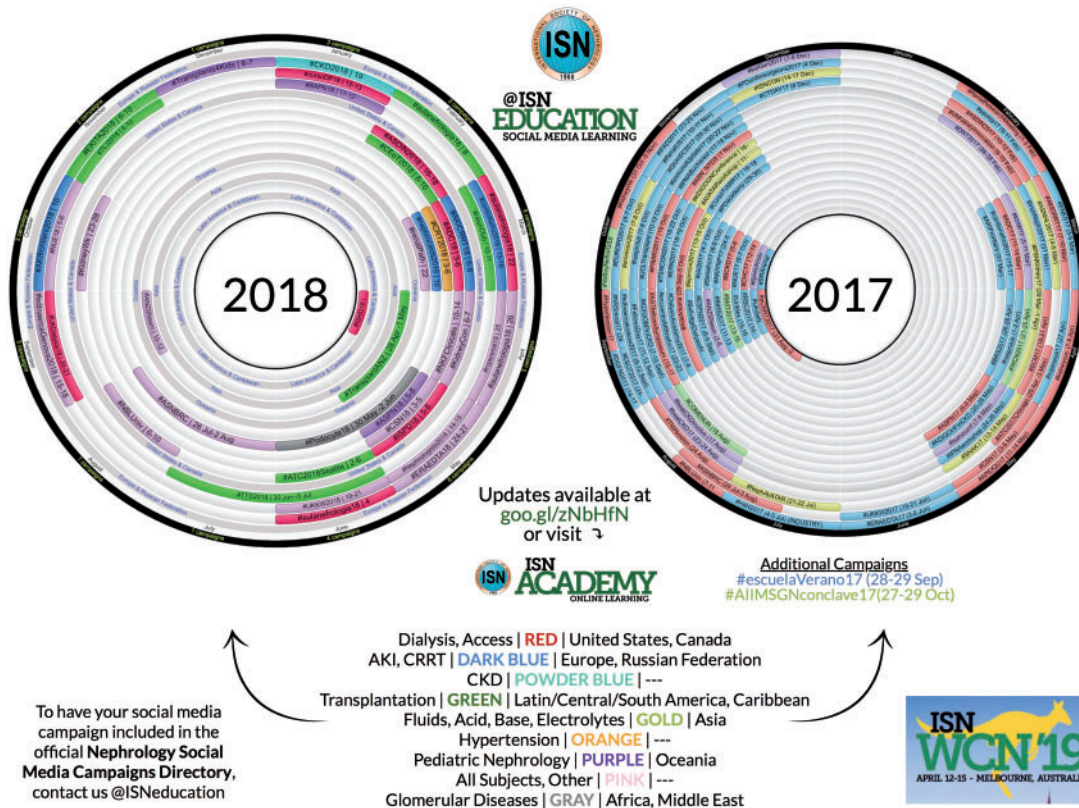


Fig. 4. Upcoming nephrology campaigns in 2018.





Fig. 5. Article infographic.

media strategy for their respective meetings (<https://twitter.com/arvindcanchi/status/885900898857242624>). With 78 micro-laboratories, the field of research is prime for a variety of investigative efforts. While the current analysis is retrospective in design, the current cadre of nephrology-focused hashtags and

those to come in 2018 present opportunities for larger retrospective and unique prospective investigations (Figure 4). These opportunities place our discipline in a noteworthy leadership role as both social media-savvy nephrologists and nephrology societies collaboratively develop generalizable and

data-driven best practice guidelines for the productive use of social media by any medical organization (Figure 5).

### Conflict of interest statement

None declared.

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