

Why commit to a blog: welcome to sports & exercise medicine 2.0!

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Abstract

Social Media and blogs are increasingly used in the everyday life and also by scientists to share their work and communicate with colleagues all around the world. In addition, blogs are believed to be valuable educational tools. This article highlights, through examples taken from the blog of the British Journal of Sports Medicine, the educational benefits for students to commit to a blog.

Keywords:

Social media, students, undergraduate, education, sports and exercise medicine

Résumé

Les médias sociaux et les blogs sont de plus en plus utilisés dans la vie de tous les jours ainsi que par les scientifiques pour partager leurs travaux et communiquer avec leurs collègues travaillant dans une autre partie du monde. Les blogs seraient également des outils pédagogiques en devenir. C'est ce que cet article s'attache à démontrer en s'appuyant sur des exemples tirés du blog du British Journal of Sports Medicine.

Mots clés:

Médias sociaux, étudiants, prégradué, enseignement, médecine du sport et de l'exercice



Figure 1: Overview of the blogs published in the BJSM Swiss Junior Doctors and Undergraduate Perspective Blog Series

Introduction

Since the early 2000s, Social Media (SoMe) have been revolutionizing the way we communicate. They have become so popular that, in April 2017, it was estimated that almost 2 billion people around the world were using Facebook and 1 billion using WhatsApp [1]. But what are exactly SoMe and why the hell are we discussing them in a Sports & Exercise Medicine (SEM) Journal?

First, we need to define the term **Web 2.0**, which describes “World Wide Web websites that emphasize **user-generated content** and **easy usability** even for non-expert users”. Web 2.0 contrasts to Web 1.0, which refers to “websites where people were limited to the passive viewing of content”. Indeed, at that time, publishing on the Web needed good HTML or computer programming skills [2].

Since both Wikipedia and SoMe belong to Web 2.0, there is probably no better reference than the first to define the latter. According to Wikipedia, SoMe are “interactive Web 2.0 Internet-based applications that facilitate the **creation** and **sharing of information**, ideas, career interests and other forms of expression via **virtual communities and network**”. Some typical SoMe examples are Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, LinkedIn and Skype to quote the most famous [1].

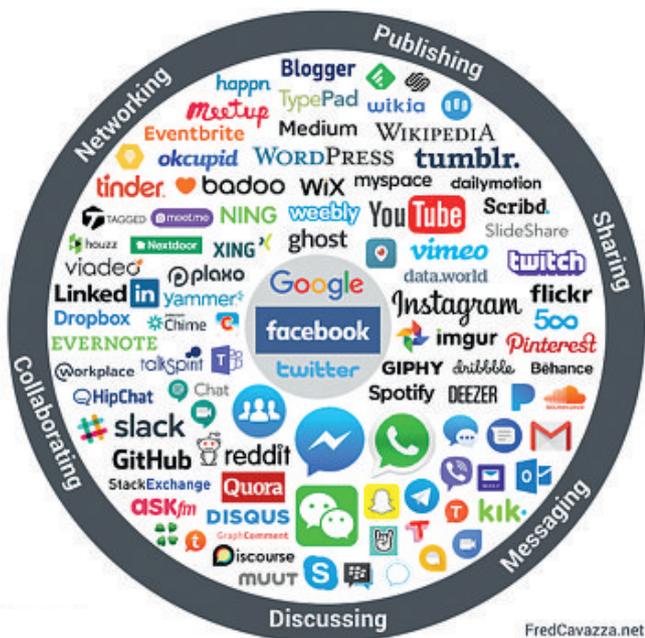


Figure 2: Social Media Landscape 2017

We have now defined Web 2.0 and SoMe but still haven't answered the question why there is an article about SoMe in SEM Journal? Well, often, we can find answers in the scientific literature. According to a recent study, scientists are increasingly using SoMe (mainly Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and blogs) to share their work and communicate with colleagues all around the world [3]. If you recently assisted to an international SEM conference, you would have noticed that almost every leading sport doctors and scientists point their Twitter accounts out at the beginning of their talk. There is even a ranking of the most followed sport scientists/

doctors on Twitter [4]. This movement is highly supported by the British Journal of Sports Medicine (BJSM), which is the SEM Journal with the best impact factor in the world [5]. Indeed, the BJSM owns its proper Twitter, Facebook and Instagram accounts and runs a very successful blog [6].

Let's focus on blogs. The name blog “comes from a truncation of the expression weblog (log meaning record or history)” and since they allow the posting of content by users without specific computer programming skills, they belong to SoMe. “A blog consists in a discussion of often informal diary-style text entries called “posts”. Those are typically displayed in reverse chronological order, so that the most recent post appears first, at the top of the web page” [7].

In a first time, blogs were “usually the work of a single individual, however “multi-author blogs” (MABs) have developed in the 2010s, with posts written by large numbers of authors and sometimes professionally edited” [7]. Currently a lot of universities (Harvard, Cambridge, ETH Zürich, EPF Lausanne), newspapers (New York Times, Le Monde, Die Zeit), or medical Journals (The Lancet, The New England Journal of Medicine, The British Medical Journal) edit their own blogs.

Since October 2016, I have had the honor to coordinate the *BJSM Swiss Junior Doctors and Undergraduate Perspective Blog Series*. This is an official BJSM blog series open to all Swiss medical students and junior doctors interested in SEM. Until now 6 articles were written by 3 students (2 from Geneva and 1 from Basel) and 3 junior doctors:

- Five pearls from the first Swiss Sports and Exercise Medicine Student's Day – for future doctors (*Figure 1*)
- Inside the Refugee Olympic Team with Team Doctor, Carlo Bagutti
- Anti-doping and the physician's role: how do we overcome the challenges in elite sport?
- Exercise oncology part 1/3: Let's get moving, exercise helps in preventing AND treating cancers!
- Mountain sports: what should a sports doctor check before authorizing patients to go at high altitudes?
- Exercise oncology part 2/3: Let's put it into practice!

This has been a very enriching experience for me and hopefully for all the authors. Hereafter, I would like to share the 6 reasons why I recommend to every medical students and junior doctors interested in SEM to contact me and commit to this blog series!

1. Learn to write a scientific paper

Our blog series is open to every Swiss medical students and junior doctors, as well as students in any allied health discipline (sport science, physiotherapy). It offers them a unique opportunity to learn to write scientific reviews and express opinions in a persuasive way without the pressure and requirement of a peer review Journal. Furthermore, while students and junior doctors are naturally not experts in SEM, it is a great occasion to “learn by doing”. Indeed, it is estimated that one retains 90% of what one learns by oneself, thus committing to a blog seems to be a pretty efficient learning method! [8]

2. Cultivate one's creativity

This is for me a key point! Medical studies are mainly based on understanding and learning by heart a huge amount of knowledge without giving a lot of opportunities to use and develop one's creativity. The blog series is open to every imaginable SEM related topics and could take any variety of formats. Students who want to write a blog but do not feel knowledgeable enough for it could interview an expert about any topic. Another opportunity could be to write a conference announcement, to summarize the take-home messages of a convention, to realize a small literature review or even to realize a small video. Of course, this list is not exhaustive since human creativity is unlimited!

3. Develop your network

Like in many areas, knowing the right people could be key in order to gather experience, get opportunities and lastly, obtain the job one really wants. Committing to a blog is a very good way to start creating a network. As mentioned above, an interview could be an occasion to bring SEM interested students and experts together. Furthermore, writing blogs is an ideal way to get a bit attention from older colleagues.

4. Stay up-to-date with latest research findings

If writing blogs has a lot of advantages, following a blog such as the one of the BJSM is an excellent way to stay up-to-date with new findings and current hot topics. Indeed, a blog is a wonderful e-learning platform and thanks to SoMe like Twitter and Facebook, it is possible to discuss the posts inside the SEM community. This year, a blog of Swim England clearly introduced new huge data (Figure 3): it stated that swimming lowers the risk of early death by 28% and death due to heart disease and stroke by 41%. Moreover, it reported, that if the British National Health System (NHS) invested 70% of its budget for non-communicable chronic diseases (NCDs), swimming has the potential to reduce the occurrence of such conditions by 20–40% [9].

5. Get careers tips

For students wanting to pursue a career in SEM, following the BJSM series “undergraduate perspective on Sports & Exercise Medicine” is a great way to get valuable advices. A good example is the blog of Rory Heath, stating the key messages he learnt from Dr. Peter Bruckner and Prof. Karim Khan during the question & answer session about pursuing a career in SEM [10]. Among others they advise us to shadow SEM physicians, to get qualified (for example through a basic first aid qualification) and to build a network through experience and ... SoMe! In another BJSM blog, I discovered that many British universities offer the possibility to pursue a Master in Sports & Exercise Medicine after medical school or physiotherapy study [11–13], which could be of interest for Swiss students as well.

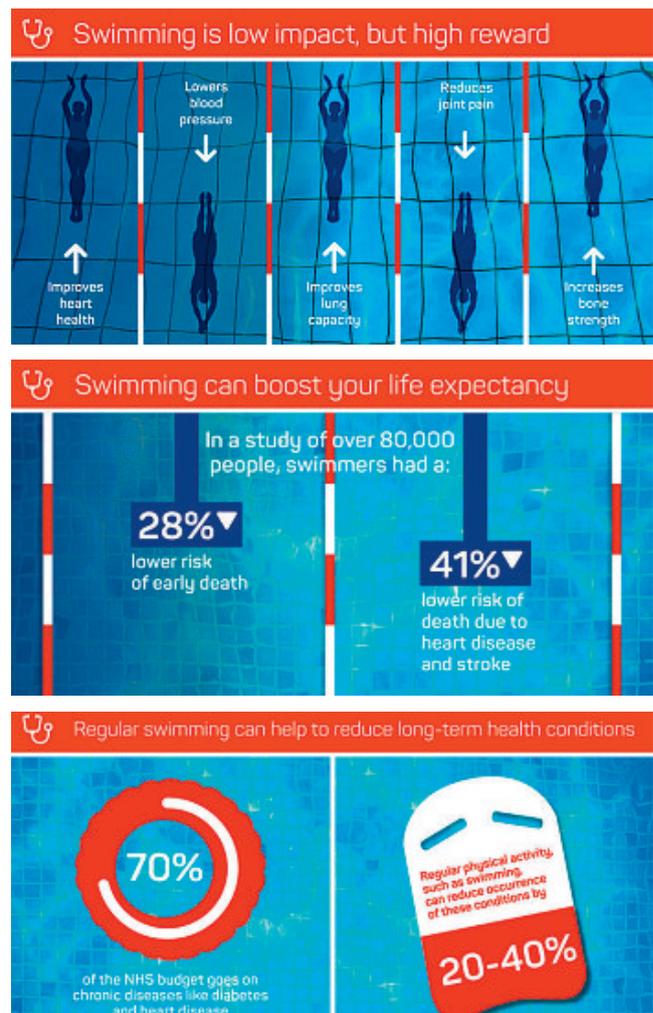


Figure 3: Infographics reproduced from the BJSM blog «Major new study on health benefits of swimming released» [9]

6. Follow conferences remotely

As a student, it is hard to attend all the conferences we would like to, particularly if they are abroad and/or for financial reason. Again, following a blog such as the BJSM one is a good way to be aware of upcoming conferences and to get the key messages without being physically present. For example, the Future of Football Medicine Conference, organized this year in the Camp Nou (Barcelona), was a great conference, whose key messages were summarized by Dr Chris Garnett in a blog [14]. This would be hopefully the case for the South African Sports Medicine Association Conference, whose conference announcement got recently published [15]. I hope that I convinced some of our readers to use the BJSM blog as a valuable source of information and commit to it! I am looking forward to hearing from you!

Conflict of interest

I coordinate the BJSM Swiss Junior Doctors and Undergraduate Perspective Blog Series, which is an unpaid job.

Funding

None

Practical implications

- Scientific blogs, especially the one of the British Journal of Sports Medicine, are free and valuable sources of information.
- Committing to a scientific blog is an enriching experience and enables students to learn to write scientific papers, to cultivate one's creativity and to develop one's network.

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