

## IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON DENTAL EDUCATION

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**ABSTRACT**

Since the discovery of World Wide Web by Tim Bernest Lee our lives have changed forever. Whether it is a boon or a curse, more importantly its usefulness depends on our perception. Internet has changed our thinking and the perception of things around us. No field has remained untouched by it. Connectivity is the most important thing the internet has brought, reducing the gaps between two continents to a Facebook status update. Dental education is no exception to this change. Platforms like YouTube, Whatsapp and Facebook have changed the way knowledge is being transmitted and perceived by dental students and dental educators alike. Though the impact of this on dental education is still unclear in the long term. This article briefly reviews the options, pros and cons of three major internet platforms, Facebook, WhatsApp and YouTube.

**KEYWORD:** Social media, Whatsapp, Facebook, Youtube, Dental Education.**INTRODUCTION**

In today's world, technology has not only been limited to computers but has also revolutionized to bend itself and make it mouldable to adjust to our needs and more importantly our demands. The last few years have seen a boom when it comes to information and communication technology.<sup>[1]</sup>

Computer literacy is defined as the knowledge and ability to use computers and related technology efficiently, with a range of skills, covering levels from elementary use to programming and advanced problem-solving.<sup>[2]</sup> But something that has changed the whole global scenario of the way we look at technology or computer, is the phone you just checked before reading this line.

In today's world, something that has assumed more importance is smartphones. Smartphones are the next step after cell phones. Cell phones have increased the efficiency of connectivity around the globe and provided a greater scope for improving communication. Smartphones have made life much easier. For all those people who might not be able to handle a computer or maybe even a simple handset smartphones got it on the go.

With the advent of smartphones and increased scientific advances during the century of the 1900's, came the most important invention of the Millennium the World Wide Web. Since the discovery of World Wide Web by Tim Bernest Lee, our lives have changed forever. No field from fashion designing to rocket science has remained unaffected by it. The world wide web is the milky way for which the Internet is the universe. The internet carries an extensive range of information resources and services, such as the inter-linked hypertext documents and applications of the World Wide Web, electronic mail, telephony and peers to peer networks for file sharing.<sup>[1]</sup>

Just as the invention of the wheel gave rise to the early Bronze Age, the invention of the World Wide Web paved the way for the age of connectivity with the dawn of Social Media. Social Media are computer-mediated tools that allow people or companies to create, share, or exchange information, career interest, ideas, and pictures/videos in virtual communities and networks. Social media applications have now evolved into an established means of communications that did not exist ten years ago and are now being used daily.<sup>[3]</sup> Social media can be put to use for a variety of reasons, including instructional tools to supplement learning. Social Media was built on skeletal ideology and

technological foundations of Web 2.0, that allows the creation and sharing of user-generated content.<sup>[2]</sup>

Social media has served as a great platform when it comes to sharing of information and increases the scope for broadening the minds of young academicians.<sup>[1]</sup> With the advent of social media and smartphones, our information-gathering efforts have shifted, from books and papers to the Internet and from the Internet to smartphones mainly via social media. Dental education is no exception to this change.<sup>[3]</sup> Through this article, we shall try to evaluate the dawn of the new era of education using social media, the advantages and disadvantages of three it's most visited sites Facebook, WHATSAPP, AND YOUTUBE.

## DISCUSSION

From 5000-year-old Sumerian clay tablets which happen to be the first existing record of dental education and dental training, to our digital tablets today. Dental education has always been evolving and adapting to the current era. Over the past few decades, there has been a paradigm shift not only in the method in which the students look upon their subjects but also in the ways in which dental educators would prefer it to be transmitted amongst their pupils. Western countries have seen a complete shift to E-books and the Internet, digital libraries and more specifically; a social media based format of education.<sup>[4]</sup>

Social media as an application by itself has been a boon when it comes to speeding our searches and group study. At one time or the other, we might have experienced the extreme exhaustion of going through various books, to look for just one reference or the time our instructor might have asked us to get back to them immediately regarding some topic.

With the help of all the information that we need being available by authentic searches on social networking sites, our search time can be reduced very easily. Hence helping us to save time, which is one of the most important parameters in today's fast world. The biggest advantage of social media is the easy availability of the sites/applications.<sup>[2]</sup> Today we are just one "PING" away from the information we need. Anything that we want and everything that we need is available on these sites. But at the same time, we do have to remember to check on the authenticity of the information, and how much of it is relevant.

## FACEBOOK

*"When you give everyone a voice and give people power, the system eventually ends up in a good place."*

The statement above is the belief upon which Facebook was started by Mark Zuckerberg. Facebook is by far the most visited social networking site. Facebook has affected the social life and the activity of people in various ways. Facebook allows users to stay in touch irrespective of where they are, as long as there is access

to the Internet. It has reunited lost family members and friends. It allows users to trade ideas, stay informed with local or global developments, and unite people with common interests/beliefs through groups.<sup>[5]</sup>

Most of us are always logged into our Facebook accounts through our laptops, tablets and most importantly through our smartphones. We receive every kind of notification or update immediately and owing to our habits nowadays, there is hardly any kind of delay between the moment of receiving and the time of checking the notification.

## SO WHY SHOULD WE USE FACEBOOK FOR DENTAL EDUCATION?

Facebook as a social media application offers a variety of the following great opportunities:

- Creation of many study groups, by encouraging users to create groups and events and invite others to it, hence connecting students worldwide. Therefore, not only does it benefit at a local level but also helps in creation of a global classroom where there is freedom for discussion and learning beyond the textbooks.<sup>[4]</sup>
- Ability to communicate seamlessly has transformed Facebook into a powerful virtual community with endless possibility. As mentioned earlier, the biggest advantage seen with this kin of social communities is bridging the distances between people making communication faster, simpler and easier.<sup>[5]</sup>
- One unique use of the formation of groups for which membership is not limited, is the use of Facebook by dental students not only at a national level but also an international level, to prepare each other for objective structured clinical examination.
- Now to look at it in a more practical view, how many and how much of a discussion can actually be undertaken by a teacher in the limited time of the classroom? The biggest advantage of social media and online classroom hours is, more in-depth discussions than those that are possible in three classroom hours.<sup>[2]</sup>
- In this kind of a study format, the learning responsibility shifts from the teacher to the student. Hence rather than the teacher being given the responsibility the student has the onus to make sure he keeps up with the community updates hence, reducing the burden on dental educators.<sup>[2]</sup>
- Facebook has also kept in mind how useful it can be when it comes to its academic advantages. It has introduced academic setting where files, lecture notes and other assignments can be posted. An active school e-mail address confirms a user as a member of the school community.

### WHY NOT FACEBOOK?

It's almost close to impossible if we say that after running such a huge social networking site, there is no problem that we have to face. Some of the common issues that we see are:

- Privacy stands as one of the biggest issues when dealing with a macro social networking site like Facebook. The biggest question stands, as to who can and cannot view all the study material that is put up.<sup>[3]</sup>
- Due to the formation of many study groups, there is limited oversight or advisement, which puts authenticity of study material as a big question. Just as the saying goes too many cooks spoil the broth, too many advisers can be equally misleading.<sup>[6]</sup>
- Students wished Facebook to remain a separate study space inaccessible to academic staff; which may lead to their misguiding. This is one of the most common problems that we all face in today's world, which again raises the matter of privacy on Facebook.<sup>[2]</sup>
- As mentioned above the concern of privacy stands as one of the sole issues that can come in the way to adoption of this new method of education. How many of us would actually like to friend our teachers on Facebook OR How many of us would be comfortable posting pictures or sharing funny comments knowing that are teachers might read it?

### YOUTUBE

One of its kind, YouTube when it comes to academic use happens to be the most important of all social media applications. YouTube was founded in 1997 and happens to be one of the oldest social media applications.<sup>[7]</sup>

YouTube allows users to stream and watch videos online. Membership might also not be necessary for all cases unless decided by the owner of the particular channel that is streaming the online videos. The most recent updates of YouTube also allows users to download the video, and then they can watch it offline according to their convenience.<sup>[7]</sup>

There has been a massive growth of educational video content on YouTube from the last decade. With videos available on almost every topic, YouTube has opened up a new dimension of education and an extraordinary way of learning and understanding.

### LETS YOUTUBE THEN?

- Many academic institutions now host their own YouTube channels allowing faculty and students to upload videos to enhance learning. How often does it happen with us that our attention slips and at exactly that point some link is missed and then that is exactly what is asked in our examinations? With the lecture streamed online, no student can ever tend to miss anything because he/she can just refer back to it because it is just a click away.<sup>[8]</sup>

- Many academic institutions now host their own YouTube channels allowing faculty and students to upload videos to enhance learning. Let's take, for example, something as simple as our general anatomy, which is so difficult to imagine and remember. With the help of YouTube, a fresh approach is provided by connection between reading and understanding.<sup>[9]</sup>
- The use of YouTube has not only benefited students but patients also. Since it has led to effective self-education and awareness on many health-related issues. Small and simple things like how to maintain a good oral hygiene and how to avoid an infection or what can be the signs of infection has led to an overall increase in awareness, and it has impacted the status of the quality of life that patients can lead.<sup>[8]</sup>
- With the use of YouTube, the clinical understanding of students has improved significantly. Dentistry being a practical field everything boils down to how well you can apply the theory u have read in your preclinical years to your clinical practice. Life has become much easier for students now because while reading about a particular condition, it is not just another point in the textbook but something that actually exists hence helps in better treatment planning.<sup>[10]</sup>
- The Internet is present almost everywhere, every time and most importantly with everyone. With the Internet being available to anyone and everyone, the students of 3rd world countries have access to the better educational opportunities. This increases the standard of practice and treatment worldwide and also enables the students to unlock his potential completely. It encourages a more knowledgeable society of doctors and helps in overall growth of a nation and in individual growth too. This can be a very important factor when taken into accounts the edge to edge competition today.<sup>[11]</sup>

### WHATS WRONG WITH YOUTUBE?

- The most important consideration of an education format is the authenticity of its information. The biggest drawback in education through online videos is the uncertainty about the authenticity of the information and the credibility of the authors.<sup>[11]</sup>
- In student life, the most important criterion to becoming a successful professional is "Guidance." When it comes to taking YouTube on an educational platform as high as professional healthcare college, the objection that can be raised on this matter is that, how are students supposed to deal with informative videos for which author's credentials and sources are not verified.<sup>[3]</sup>
- Studies have evaluated YouTube videos to determine the accuracy of content as assessed by independent clinicians and academic staff and reported the videos to be of variable quality and showed a need to discriminate useful from misleading information.

- Azer et al in 2010 aimed to identify whether YouTube could help students in learning surface anatomy, they found 57 videos on it, out of which 15 of them classified as educationally useful. This only proved how students can be in a dilemma when they have to look into a particular subject.<sup>[9]</sup>
- Searching for a topic-specific video YouTube is a task owing to the vast criteria of its very own search engine. A student without proper guidance is prone to get lost in this whole plethora of information.<sup>[4]</sup>

### WHATSAPP

WhatsApp Messenger uses the Internet to send text messages, images, videos, user location and audio and media messages to other users, using standard cellular mobile numbers.

In a December 2013 blog post, WhatsApp claimed that 400 million active users use the service each month. As of April 22, 2014, WhatsApp had over 500 million monthly active users. 700 million photos and 100 million videos were being shared daily, and the messaging system was handling more than 10 billion messages each day. On August 24, 2014, Koum announced on his Twitter account that WhatsApp had over 600 million active users worldwide.

At that point, WhatsApp was adding about 25 million new users every month, or 833,000 active users per day. With 65 million active users representing 10% of the total worldwide users, India has the largest number of consumers.<sup>[12]</sup>

### WHATSAPP OVER EVERYONE ELSE?

- In today's world where we are always checking our mobile phones, every minute for a new notification, an application like WhatsApp that allows the users to check if the recipients have received and read messages is very efficient.<sup>[3]</sup>
- WhatsApp is also the most popular messaging app used amongst dental students and dental educators which again makes its use easy and comfortable while also global at the same time.<sup>[2]</sup>
- The concept of groups though introduced by Facebook has been now revolutionized by WhatsApp. Faster, quicker and better group discussion is now possible. Also, the membership in the groups can be limited to a small number by a group admin hence keeping its membership in check.<sup>[12]</sup>
- Since the use of it is more personal, in-depth discussions can be carried more easily. WhatsApp allows the interaction between two individuals to be more personal and on a more one to one basis. Hence discussions which might not be possible in the limited schedule of classroom time.<sup>[4]</sup>
- Students generally shy of approaching teachers and friends might find the use of WhatsApp more convenient in communicating with staff members

and their own colleagues in resolving their doubts and difficulties.<sup>[2]</sup>

- Since WhatsApp operates on cell phone numbers that the user is using privacy is not as much of a concern because the profile is not open to the entire web. On a macrosocial networking website such as WhatsApp privacy can be one of the major concerns of the day and with WhatsApp taking care of that, it again tops the charts on its popularity.
- One of the biggest advantages that WhatsApp provides us with is blocking of unwanted users. This again is one step towards maintaining the integrity and privacy of its users.<sup>[12]</sup>
- Research in this field has shown that a lot of students have shown a great interest in making this a permanent tool in their education system, and they have shown an increased interest in inquisitiveness in their subject.<sup>[12]</sup>

### SO WHAT'S NOT UP ABOUT WHATSAPP?

- The biggest and most important consideration in today's world regarding the use of anything new is research. WhatsApp, when it is taken as an individual topic of research, has not been taken seriously by researchers and hence the lack of research limits its use as an educational tool.<sup>[4]</sup>
- Staff and students have expressed mixed feelings on sharing of personal mobile phone numbers. This, as a matter of fact, is a very important factor because it is a question of professional and personal lives getting mixed up, which stands against professionalism.
- As mentioned earlier also the field of use of WhatsApp has remained highly unexplored and is very premature in dental education.<sup>[4]</sup>
- It is very important that students understand, the introduction of their mentors in groups where discussions of study topics are helpful is imperative to their studies because these conversations can be equally misleading without proper guidance.<sup>[2]</sup>

### CONCLUSION

Social media today is the basic foundation on which today's world is established. "Reality in Virtuality" may be the more appropriate term for today's world. In a cyber environment like ours, it is ignorance not to evolve an education system that does not fit in with it.

The man has always evolved through the ages, and with the evolution of man comes the evolution in the method of transmitting knowledge to the next generation. The next generation as mentioned earlier is evolving more into a cyber world and hence to keep pace with it; we have to realize the importance of social media in it.

Social media is on a boom when it comes to its use in the healthcare profession but when looked into its dental aspect it calls for research and more implementation.<sup>[4]</sup>

Its use in India is yet in its infancy with a huge untapped potential and needs more development. There has to be general acceptance of social media in our education system. There has to be increased awareness among students and educators to shift the focus of after classroom learning towards the Internet and more importantly social media.

At the same time, there has to be some kind of filter that needs to develop for these websites because everything that is available on these websites is not always right. This kind of misleading information is very dangerous for students in their basic years where the basics will form the foundation of their coming years in dentistry.

With proper guidance of their mentors, students will, in fact, be luckier in facing a different approach to the subject which will involve a practical approach with profound knowledge of theory. Hence we see a great array of opportunities with the advent of technology in the field of education.

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