

COMMUNICATING HEALTH: A STUDY ON THE USAGE OF NEW MEDIA IN HOSPITALS TO CREATE AWARENESS AMONG INFORMATION SEEKERS¹Sananda Mukherjee and ²*Dr. Nandini Lakshmikantha¹Research Scholar, School of Communication, Manipal Academy of Higher Education, MAHE.²Professor, School of Communication, Manipal Academy of Higher Education, MAHE.***Corresponding Author: Dr. Nandini Lakshmikantha**

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ABSTRACT

In this era of technological revolution dependence of people for information on various social media platforms appears to be a common phenomenon. Health, recognized as one of the primary concerns under Sustainable Development Program, is also one of the many areas on which people search for appropriate information using social media platforms. Unless it is a state of compulsion people try to research about the facilities and services provided by hospitals before entering inside. On the other hand, with medical services moving from speciality to super speciality status in addition to the entry of multinational companies into the health service sector, Hospital Management and Administration has entered into a competitive situation. Every hospital irrespective of its nature, maintains its own website, and tries its best to make its presence on the internet. As the information seeker is alert and seeks knowledge before entering the hospital, the primary objective of the hospitals these days is to provide information to the assessor. This study intends to investigate the websites created by select hospitals of Karnataka and understand the method of adopting e-health tools. The study will also focus on the online interactive procedure adopted by the hospitals with the patients/ information seekers. **Methodology:** A systematic content analysis focussing on the content and methods of communications. The websites of 5 hospitals of Karnataka were selected on the basis of bed size of the hospitals and then they were chosen by lottery method. The websites were studied between September 2018 to October 2018 on day to day basis. **Implications:** The different communication patterns and the media formats followed in the different websites will eventually enhance e-patient knowledge and also encourage and publicise the involvement of patients in newer ways that will replace the existing methods of healthcare communication.

KEYWORDS: Health communication, internet, new media, social media.**BACKGROUND**

A communicative website is the face of many successful organisation today in the age of new media. When we talk about health, proper communication plays a major role than any innovative technologies to uplift health. Different organisations use different creative ideas to popularise their organisation but connecting new media to extract information about their services is the new development in the health sector.

The emergence of social media in 2004 made a huge impact and gave a new meaning to communication patterns.

INTRODUCTION

Health communication revolves around different levels which includes individual, group, organization, community or mass-media and a hospital uses all these levels to communicate with its service seekers. Like any other field in today's world, communication plays not only an essential role in health management and

administration but also crucial role. This is largely because communication regarding health is personal and specific. The method of communication in any hospital, needs to be highly interactive and interpersonal as no one enters the hospital in a happy state and the communication established at every level from entry to exit should follow Aristotle's principles of communication model which includes ethos, pathos and logos. (Joel Shalowitz, 2013).

However, with the changing times it is important to note that the mode of communication in a majority of hospitals is technology driven. Hospitals of today use Health Information Technology (HIT) for various purposes which includes accessing electronic health records (EHR) and transferring health information. E-Health tools are extensively used to monitor health status e.g., accessing and tracking personal health information electronically to monitor one's healthcare. However usage of e tools by the hospitals is relatively less when compared to usage of social media platforms by the

public for acquiring information related to health purpose and this is supported by the research conducted by Devlon N. Jackson, et.al (2016). Accessing internet media does not just restrict to information related to various health concerns, but also about the hospitals that provide services. People, today invariably access information related to the services provided and available in the hospital before they enter unless they are in state of emergency. The hospitals on the other hand, are forced to face the challenges of the competitive and changing world, as they cannot restrict their communication only with the patients after they are admitted. In this information driven world communication need to happen even with latent public along with registered public. As a result of which a majority of hospitals have invariably made their presence in platforms of social networking sites.

Adopting to internet as the medium of communication in health has brought a total revolution in the health care industry. "Social media being one such medium of the internet which is changing the way in which citizens and health professionals communicate. Some existing studies have assessed the use of Health 2.0 by hospitals, which shows clear evidence of growth in recent years" (Antonio Martinez, et.al; 2017).

Karnataka, a predominant state in India, is known for its health care facilities. People visit Karnataka not only for tourism and education perspective but also from treatment perspective. Like anywhere else though both private and public sector are deeply involved in providing health services to the needy, the feel of competition towards providing the best health services is commonly found among private health care providers. With multinational companies entering the health care market the competition between the hospitals has been very intense. To cope with the changing times, the hospitals use various media platforms to communicate with their clients and propagate about the facilities that are available in their hospitals. This study was taken up to examine the method of utilizing social media platforms by select hospitals of Karnataka not only on how these hospitals are gearing up to disseminate information about the status and facilities available in the select hospitals but also to interact with people who are in need of health support. With background of knowledge that communication in social media formats followed in the different websites will eventually encourage e-patient education and also promote the involvement of patients in newer ways that will replace traditional healthcare interactions, and may further proceed to signify enhanced levels of participatory medicine, this study gains importance.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study follows an observational approach that was carried for a period of 30 days, September 5th- October 5th 2018. Each and every detail included in the websites were noted, along with the method and frequency of

uploading latest information. For the study purpose hospitals which are Public, Public but managed by Private institutions and Multinational Hospitals were considered. The hospitals were selected based on number of beds. Due to time and resource constraints only five hospitals were selected for observation. The sampling included KMC (Kasturba Medical College & Hospitals) Mangalore, Manipal, Fortis Hospitals, Bangalore, J S S Hospital, Ramanuja Road, Mysore, Karnataka, Bangalore Medical College & Research Institute, Bengaluru, Karnataka, Karnataka Institute of Medical Sciences (KIMS), Hubli, Karnataka.

Study Population

The data was extracted from each hospital from their website with an objective to check the pattern of communication followed and the social media networks the hospitals are connected with. Apart from the social networking web pages but utilizing the new media tools in order to communicate is adopted by many organizations but how efficiently they use these mediums to stay connected with the customers and communicate is examined in the study. A structured schedule was used to collect the data for content analysis.

Content Analysis of the Websites

A. Information Regarding the Hospitals

Kasturba Medical College, this hospital started in May 1961, with 150 beds and presently it has 2032 beds in Manipal, Karnataka. The hospital is well facilitated with state-of-art diagnostic and therapeutic departments to facilitate treatment of a wide range of medical and surgical diseases. This hospital along with other major and varied departments also includes a well-equipped 280, bed cancer research centre. Their social media connect is with 9 different mediums which indeed gives a vast range of choice and opens up to a deeper communication with variety.

The landing page shows bars like - List of doctors, Specialities, Contact details, What to do when help arrives, Emergency, Helpline number, Online appointment gateway, Direct tele appointment number, Online messenger for queries, International Patients highlight, Search box, Promoting health gift cards. (<https://manipal.edu/kmc-manipal/hospital.html>).

Fortis Hospitals, Bengaluru, with a PAN India presence, uses almost all social media platforms actively. This hospital operates in four nations and according to 'topmastersinhealthcare.com' was ranked second among the 30 most technologically improved and advanced hospitals in the world. Fortis has a website that has a domain aged almost 15 years which in itself gives a lot of importance as it has acquired an online space for quite some time now, thus it automatically gains a Google's recognition. The website is observed to be not having an internal blog and the website does not seem to be enough responsive which is also a reason that it does not have a good search engine ranking.

On LinkedIn, it has a good number of followers, 13704, which adds to the credibility of the page. On Google+, the brand is very active with the use of # like #worldheartday, but has less number of followers, 216. On YouTube the brand has a whooping number of subscribers, 2146. This can be attributed to the good quality of videos posted. The landing page shows bars like- Home, Centres of Excellence, Our Doctors, Health, Packages, Locations, Resources, Contact Us, Facebook & You Tube direct links and Request a call back. (<https://fortisbangalore.com/>).

JSS Hospital started in the year 1974. It was initially set up for annual health check-up for the JSS students. JSS Medical College finally started in 1984 with 60 bedded hospital facility which later was upgraded into 1200 bedded to cater healthcare needs of the needy people staying in and around Mysuru region.

The landing page comes with the latest news of the hospital and showcases tabs like- About us, Patients, Services, Facilities, Contact us, Ambulance emergency, 24/7 helpline, Cardiac emergency, Emergency department. They also showcase their facilities of having expert testing instruments and other facilities that enhances the hospital status. (<https://jsshospital.in/>).

Bangalore Medical College & Research Institute, Bangalore, Karnataka, started as a private Medical College in the year 1955 by Mysore Education Society and later in the year 1957, it was taken up by government of Mysore, affiliated to Mysore University and then on to the Bangalore University. It got the Rajiv Gandhi University of Health Sciences affiliation later in the year 1996. Bangalore Medical College and Research Institute has MCI recognition. It has 4 constituent institutions and each one consists of approximately more than 500 beds. This hospital has no mention about any social media connection anywhere around the landing page. They have bars like, Home, About Us, Administration, Departments, Hospitals, Students, Education, Research, Announcements, Gallery, Recruitment/Careers, Contact Us, Director's desk, Alumni, Anti Ragging, Image Gallery. (<http://www.bmcric.org/>).

Karnataka Institute of Medical Sciences, Hubli (KIMS, Hubli) is a medical school in Hubli, India is affiliated with Rajiv Gandhi University of Health Sciences, Bangalore, Karnataka. It is one of the oldest government tertiary healthcare centre and largest multi-speciality Hospital in North Karnataka recognized by Medical Council of India. In June 1997, the then Karnataka Medical College was accorded the Autonomous status and so was born, the present Karnataka Institute of Medical Sciences, Hubli.

The landing page is very straight and highlights only academic facilities. The hospital provides no other details regarding the facilities available in the hospital. (<http://www.kimshubli.org/>).

B. Web based Facilities available for patients

Chatting facility for patients: It is observed that the websites of all hospitals provide a facility for chatting. This facility is provided to instigate the interactive sessions with the patients. In the study it is found that all hospitals under study have made a provision for automated replies for the queries raised by the patients/relatives. However this facility largely restricts to provide the basic information related to the hospital and does not allow personal interactions or counselling with the medical professionals.

Telephonic Appointments: All the hospitals under the study have published their office phone number. This facility provides convenience for the people to take appointments in advance thus facilitating a good time management for both patients/relatives and the doctors. However, the hospitals lack in providing reminder alerts or the non-availability of a particular doctor at the given time for an unseen reason. Apart from this the appointment seeking facility can be availed by the patient or relatives only during official working hours of the hospital. In case of any emergency the deceased need to be rushed to the hospital as there is no alternative arrangement.

Health Gift card: This is a unique feature promoted by KMC Manipal, which allows public to buy health treatments for a chosen amount and gift to the members of friends or family. This method of spreading the feel of care is not adopted by other hospitals under the study.

Useful Education to the patients: In many incidents related to health people need First Aid/Emergency Treatment. Interestingly among all lead hospitals only KMC, Manipal showcases a range of emergency treatment procedures which can be easily adapted by patients/relatives. This initiative is not found among other hospitals under study.

Interactive page: Understanding the importance of Communication, particularly interactive communication being an essence of success of any industry today, all hospitals have adopted a method to publish Testimonies / Patient's speak page. Going by the content published in the testimonials and analysing the language used by the clients, Ex: repetition of words like "good", "Excellent", "friendly", "Comfortable" it is evident that the hospitals in this competitive market intends to display the reviews and testimonies that play on ethos aspect of the information seeker. All the hospitals have a page on testimonials.

Blogging: Blogging is another form of communication that is largely used by the companies to reach their stake holders. Among the hospitals under study Fortis and KMC maintains blog. In the blogs maintained by the administrators, material related to the events conducted by the hospital, and other health related different topics are published. JSS Hospital on the other hand publishes

the details of events in the form of newsletter. Blogs provide a quick read material and gives a clear understanding about the vision and mission of the hospital. They also provide an indication about the hospitals connectivity with the stakeholders using the medium of internet or new media.

Request a call back: Taking an appointment from the hospital is a major challenge. Despite having many lines, a majority of times the lines tend to get busy. To provide a relief to the person who intends to take appointment, some of the hospitals facilitate a “request a call back” option is provided by hospitals of today. Among the hospitals under study, Fortis hospitals & JSS hospitals Mysuru, provides this facility.

News Updates: A hospital is a buzzing place of activities. Apart from routine medical check-up and treatment hospital will conduct various other activities like health camps, lectures, seminars and conferences for the benefit of public and for the people belonging to the fraternity. To take such information to the interested public, hospitals maintain news update scrolls on their website. Among the hospitals under study only JSS hospital Mysuru, maintained the bulletin scroll.

The Virtual Tour

“The Virtual Tour”, is a very interesting online communication which is adopted by many multinational hospitals. An information seeker will get a chance to go around the hospital ambience and get acclimatized about the ward or way to reach the ward. This facility is not found among any of the hospital under the study tour around the hospital.

C. Links to other social media platforms

Internet has provided its users various social media platforms for the benefit of its users. It was interesting and important to study if the hospitals under the study handled an account in their name on various popular social media platforms. It is important to note that though a health professionals working for an institute may hold an account in SNS but the interest here was to examine if the Institutions maintain accounts and maintain them. Posts on Social Media Platform. Ex: Facebook, You Tube can get high visibility to the activities conducted in the hospitals. Though there are many SNSs popular few were considered for the study.

All the hospitals are connected with the prime social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, and Instagram.

Conclusions and marketing implications

The health care organizations have been increasingly getting dependant on social media platforms for communicating health. The new media platforms vary in their features and therefore they attract to different group of people. Internet based health-related queries came into

existence from 2010, and was primarily used in order to support a decision, such as looking for a second opinion or even purchasing drugs. Wikipedia is one of the most common examples of how people are using internet sources to assess their illness, for it holds an enormous amount of information covering medical data, which can also be compared to the commercial encyclopaedias. Wikipedia being easily accessible and easily understandable is steadily becoming the first trustable source for all the health related information including the medical terminologies for the users.

The common observation with all the five hospitals observed is, they are more business oriented and presents the hospital more as an organisation perspective and not from the cultural aspect. They are very up to date with providing information regarding their infrastructure development and facilities with the users. All the 5 hospitals believe in live communication with the consumers and they have their representatives 24/7 available which is possibly one of the best measures in order to complete the queries of the consumers going through their web page.

Showcasing good testimonials is one of the wisest business strategies used as a medium of communication between the hospitals and its consumers by all the 5 hospitals which is observed to be a new trend setter. It is observed that these testimonials keep changing over a period of time and focuses on latest reviews.

Communication failures proves to be serious and causes fatal implications for patient safety. “Data published by The Joint Commission in the United States has consistently highlighted errors in communication as the most common root cause of sentinel events, with handoff errors in particular being implicated in as many as 80% of all adverse events”.

The health care sector should prioritize the improvement of their systems. To be specific, there is a great need for the health systems to focus on the improvements of their way of communication and modalities among the closed healthcare settings. Worldwide, the hospitals are still adapting the age old device of communication, the 1-way pager system. Despite the worldwide adaption, the users continue to complain regarding its ineffective and disruptive nature.

More than using different technological mediums for effective communication, the health care should adapt the empathically proven mediums.

Sr. No	Hospital Name	No. of beds	Facebook followers
1.	Kasturba Medical College, Manipal, Mangalore	2032	3034
2.	Fortis Hospitals, Bengaluru	1200	1,088,282
3.	JSS Hospital, Mysuru	1200	It does not have a public page
4.	Bangalore Medical College & Research Institute, Bengaluru	2000	It has a public group not an open page
5.	Karnataka Institute of Medical Sciences, Hubli (KIMS, Hubli)	1100	1205 likes, followers are not visible

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