

Social Media and Neuromodulation: A Tango for Two?

Georgios K Matis*

Department of Stereotactic and Functional Neurosurgery, University Hospital Cologne, Germany



***Corresponding author:** Georgios K Matis, Department of Stereotactic and Functional Neurosurgery, University Hospital Cologne, Cologne, Germany

Submission:  December 18, 2019

Published:  January 21, 2020

Volume 3 - Issue 1

How to cite this article: Georgios K Matis. Social Media and Neuromodulation: A Tango for Two?. *Nov Res Sci.*3(1). NRS.000555.2020.
DOI: [10.31031/NRS.2020.3.000555](https://doi.org/10.31031/NRS.2020.3.000555)

Copyright@ Georgios K Matis, This article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, which permits unrestricted use and redistribution provided that the original author and source are credited.

Opinion

Neuromodulation, as defined by the International Neuromodulation Society (INS), is “the alteration of nerve activity through targeted delivery of a stimulus, such as electrical stimulation or chemical agents, to specific neurological sites in the body” [1]. It is an established option when conservative measures fail to relieve the symptoms of the patients (e.g. pain, spasticity, tremor). With the help of leads, catheters, neurostimulators, and pumps electrical pulses or pharmacological agents (e.g. morphine, baclofen, ziconotide) can be applied. The goal is the management of various symptoms of chronic conditions.

Social Media (SM) is a world of human interactions driven by content and supported by the use of technology [2]. The number of active SM users worldwide was estimated in 2018 as over 3.1 billion (42% of the total population) with 448 million in Europe [3]. These users participate actively in these networked conversations, enabling powerful new forms of social organization and knowledge exchange to emerge [4].

The question now arises as to how SM could help the field of neuromodulation to evolve and how physicians across various disciplines could become more aware of what is the true potential of this therapy option. It is an indisputable fact that nowadays not only the health care providers but also the patients are engaged in SM activities. It is impressive that 77% of patients use search engines prior to making an appointment [5] and 41% of patients report that information found on SM affect their choice of a specific doctor, hospital, or medical facility [6].

Many opportunities lie ahead for neuromodulation community. To start with, the patients can achieve autonomy, empowerment, self-efficacy and support. This is true especially for patients with rare diseases or “personal disorders” such as fecal incontinence or pelvic floor disorders. The physicians can make healthcare decisions that align with patients’ priorities, recruit patients for clinical trials or even do the typical patient follow-up. Public health promotion, awareness campaigns or fundraising are some additional possibilities. In the context of medical education, SM could improve medical knowledge and medical skills. Students could be also recruited, and e-learning modalities are a significant asset as well. With the aid of SM health care providers can enhance their professional networking or increase their credibility as thought leaders. The tele mentoring (e-mentorship) provides a new way to get introduced to neuromodulation leaders. And last but not least, SM could help disseminating news and research and, thus, accelerate the implementation of research advances to reduce the burden of many disorders.

Like the Roman god Janus who is usually depicted as having two faces, SM could have negative aspects too. There is no peer review process when something is posted. That means that the quality or the reliability of the content cannot be guaranteed. The medicolegal liability is always an issue. This is why it is suggested not to give medical advice through SM channels. Not rarely, SM activity becomes an end in itself and distracts the actual learning process.

The neuromodulation community should use SM wisely. Marc Twain once wrote: “The secret of getting ahead is getting started.” A good start would be the development of a code of ethics for SM dealing with the patient education (making pertinent information available

to patients), the patient privacy (maintaining the confidentiality), and the dissemination of truth (refraining from making deceptive statements) [7]. By doing so, a synergy (=creation of a whole that is greater than the simple sum of its parts) is to be expected with a plethora of advantages for both patients and physicians [8]. To sum up, SM is actually more about “doing more with less,” where it is possible to begin gradually, while observing examples of best practices and keeping always in mind the limitations and the responsibilities that come with the use of SM [9]. So, yes, it is a tango for two. And tango is about dancing the music, not the steps.

References

1. <https://www.neuromodulation.com/neuromodulation-defined>
2. <https://heidicohen.com/social-media-definition>
3. <https://digitalreport.wearesocial.com>
4. <http://www.cluetrain.com/book.html>
5. <https://www.dmn3.com/dmn3-blog/5-healthcare-marketing-trends-you-should-know-about/>
6. Lefebvre RC, Bornkessel AS (2013) Digital social networks and health. *Circulation* 127(17): 1829-1836.
7. Elmously A, Salemi A, Guy TS (2018) The anatomy of a tweet: Social media in surgical practice. *Semin Thorac Cardiovasc Surg* 30(3): 251-255.
8. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-meaning-of-synergy-working-together-for-good-and-ill-11544804040>
9. <https://www.neuromodulation.com/ins-newsletter--December-2019>

For possible submissions Click below:

Submit Article