
Getting Started with Twitter



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The growth of social media for medical CPD has been astronomical over recent years. More and more healthcare professionals are taking to Twitter to share useful papers and educational resources. The emphasis on encouraging Free Open Access Medical Education (FOAM) is embedded throughout these interactions.

We have no intention of reinventing the wheel with this one, but have tried to combine the wealth of information already out there with a few of our own experiences. Hopefully this will help newcomers to Twitter, and perhaps persuade those still resisting to come on board.

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What is Twitter?

- Online social networking /microblogging platform enabling users to send and read text-based messages ('tweets').
- Limited to 140 characters [see highlighted text below to see how long that is!]
- Photos can be tweeted
- You only read tweets of people you follow
- Anyone can follow you, although you can block them if you wish

Benefits

- Global conversation with like-minded individuals interested in the latest medical practice and literature
- It's acceptable just to watch if you prefer
- Follow conferences even if you are not there
- Social networking and friendships develop and can be consolidated at conferences, with colleagues across the globe.

What does it mean to follow someone on Twitter?

This means that you've chosen to subscribe to their Twitter updates. You can unfollow them at any time. Similarly, anyone is able to follow you. If you decide that you do not wish for them to do this, you can always 'block' them. You can easily see who is following you.

Who should I follow?

Have a look at someone you know, who is already using Twitter for medical education purposes, and look at their list of people they are following. You will quickly learn to recognise the Twitter characters who are reliable and useful, and after a period of Twitter interaction, you should start building up your own following.

What's @ and # all about?

@TwitterID directs your message to that person. You can add other names if you want to send to multiple but beware the character limit. If '@' appears at the start of the tweet it will go to that person AND anyone who is following both you and them. If '@' appears later in the tweet, it will go to that person and ALL of your followers.

To illustrate this, if you send the following tweet '@avkwong this blog is rubbish' - I will receive this message and anyone that is following both of us. If you send 'This blog is rubbish @avkwong' or 'This blog by @avkwong is rubbish' - I will receive this message and also ALL of your followers – thanks!

A Direct Message (DM)

This is a private message and visible only to you.

(hashtag) is used to mark keywords or topics in a tweet. Anyone can make a hashtag at any time, simply by typing a phrase of the form '#topic' in a tweet (again no spaces). This creates a page specific to that hashtag and whenever someone tweets and includes this hashtag, it will be visible on this page as well as to anyone who follows them.

Many hashtags have already been created, and medical conferences will advertise the ones they are using e.g. #sicem2014 (International Symposium on Intensive Care and Emergency Medicine 2014), #ICSSOA14 (State of the Art Meeting, ICS 2014) and #SMACCUS (Social Media and Critical Care Conference 2014). The days of writing notes at conferences (if you did in the first place) have also gone if the conference is well covered by avid Twitter users. Photos of conference slides, posters and equipment at trade exhibitions can also be tweeted and shared.

What's Twitter not so good for?

Apart from your social life, it is not a great platform for having extensive discussion and debate. This often is difficult to fit in 140 characters, and results in huge number of tweets about one topic, and the context of these key messages can often be lost in translation.

A word of caution with using Twitter

You should comply with the [General Medical Council \(UK\)'s 'Good Medical Practice'](#) or equivalent in your country, and it is worth having a look at [the brief GMC regulations](#).

Personal experience

We have found Twitter a fantastic vehicle for learning, sharing and discussing the latest literature, resources and details at conferences. It still amazes us that we were able to have discussions about the TTM trial on Sunday 17 November 2013 as it was being discussed in Dallas (have we decided yet 33oC or 36oC?!). Access to information, working collaboratively and encouraging each other in a really friendly and supportive way must be credited to Twitter and all the incredible FOAMites involved. Join now!

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Summary

- Register at [Twitter.com](#)
- Install the App on your mobile device(s)
- Follow users and hashtags (#)
- No, you DO NOT have to contribute
- It is OK to watch

A few suggestions of who to follow to get you started....

Intensive Care Network

Twitter - [@I_C_N](#)

Website - [intensivecarenetwork.com](#)

Intensive Care Network is a site designed by Oli Flower and Matt MacPartlin as an educational and networking resource for critical care.

Life In The Fast Lane

Twitter – [@sandnsurf](#)

Website – [lifeinthefastlane.com](#)

"We are Australasian critical care physicians and nurses exploring the changing world of eLearning, emergency medicine, critical care and toxicology through clinical cases, fictionalized anecdotes and medical satire."

European Society of Intensive Care Medicine

Twitter – [@ESICM](#)

Website – [esicm.org](#)

European Society of Intensive Care Medicine is an international association promoting intensive care medicine, education, research, and professional development.

Wessex Intensive Care Society

Twitter – [@WessexICS](#)

Website – [wessexics.com](#)

Twitter feed for the Wessex Intensive Care Society (WICS). Supporters of [#FOAMed](#). Twitter stream collated by [@stevemathieu75](#).

The Bottom Line

Twitter – [@WICSBottomLine](#)

Website – [wessexics.com/The_Bottom_Line](#)

Summary and Critique of the landmark papers in the Critical Care and EM literature [#FOAMed](#) [#FOAMcc](#)

Scott Weingart

Twitter – [@emcrit](#)

Website – [emcrit.org](#)

"I am an ED Intensivist in NYC. I host the EMCrit Podcast where I explore my obsession with all things ED Critical Care. Vociferous supporter of [#FOAMed](#)."

Rob MacSweeney

Twitter – [@CritCareReviews](#)

Website – [criticalcarereviews.com](#)

Free updates and links to newly published critical care articles, plus the largest structured archive of free critical care review articles on the web.

Saint Emlyn's

Twitter – [@stemlyns](#)

Website – [stemlynsblog.org](#)

A virtual hospital in the heart of post industrial Virchester. Emergency medicine cases, BestBets and evidence based practice. Also [@EMManchester](#) [#FOAMed](#).

The RAGE Podcast

Twitter – [@RAGEpodcast](#)

Website – [ragepodcast.com](#)

The Resuscitationist's Awesome Guide to Everything by [@precordialthump](#) [@cliffreid](#) [@criticalcarenow](#) [@karelhabig](#) [@Mjcartner](#) and [@docjohnhinds](#) [#FOAMed](#) [#FOAMcc](#).

Scan Crit

Twitter – [@scancrit](#)

Website – [scancrit.com](#)

Twitter feed of the <http://ScanCrit.com> website. A blog on anaesthesia, intensive care and emergency medicine. In-hospital and outside. [#FOAM](#) [#FOAMed](#) [#FOAMcc](#)

ICU Management

Twitter - [@ICU_Management](#)

Website – [icu-management.org](#)

The Official Management and Practice Journal of [ISICEM](#). Providing the latest intensive care and emergency medicine news and practice management solutions.

References

Thoma B, Joshi N, Trueger S et al. Five strategies to effectively use online resources in emergency medicine. Ann Emerg Med, 64(4): 392-5. [Accessed: 27 November 2014] Available from: [http://www.annemergmed.com/article/S0196-0644\(14\)00488-0/pdf](http://www.annemergmed.com/article/S0196-0644(14)00488-0/pdf)

If you want to know how we practiced medicine 5 years ago, read a textbook.

If you want to know how we practiced medicine 2 years ago, read a journal.

If you want to know how we practice medicine now, go to a conference.

If you want to know how we will practice medicine in the future, listen in the hallways and use FOAM.

-- Joe Lex 2012 --

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