

CONNECT DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS-SOCIAL MEDIA AND BLOG/NEWSLETTER ARTICLE

INSTRUCTIONS FOR RESEARCHERS

Social Media and blogs (or electronic newsletters) are one of the fastest ways to get a message out, and to get feedback from a lot of people. The CONNECT team has assembled some tips and created example Facebook and Twitter posts, along with a blog, for the CAP Study to help get you started.

There are certain things you can do to make sure your message gets seen by as many people as possible. The tips and examples can apply to posts you distribute directly through an existing or new account, or that you distribute to patient advocacy organizations and others listed in the CONNECT Dissemination Capabilities Directory.

If you don't have an account set up for your organization or research center, start by considering what social media channels you wish to use. Based on the focus groups the CONNECT team conducted and our ongoing digital efforts, the best practice for reaching COPD patients and caregivers is to start with a Facebook account, and when that is going well, add a Twitter account, followed by sites like Instagram.

If you are unfamiliar with how to create a Facebook page for your research, here is a site that provides tips for researchers: <https://phdlife.warwick.ac.uk/2014/01/03/facebook-for-researchers/comment-page-1/>.

For additional instruction on social media outreach in the COPD community consider visiting <https://4copd.org/social-media-content-1> or <https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health-topics/education-and-awareness/copd-learn-more-breathe-better/social-media-posts>. These resources are not specific to research related communication but both offer useful tips on leveraging the platforms to increase your reach and generate results.

Need a little more information about how to use social media as a researcher? This site might be a good start: <https://phdlife.warwick.ac.uk/2014/01/03/facebook-for-researchers/comment-page-1/> or <https://shar.es/aXBFdV>.

Social Media Tips

To start a successful social media campaign, it is important to remember these 10 tidbits of advice. Prior to starting out, we recommend that you complete the process outlined in the Infographic Instructions as this will help you refine your key messages for use in social media and a blog. We have also created a list of example hashtags and COPD-related accounts to consider leveraging in your social media efforts.

- 1) Write out your objectives. What is it that you need to communicate? Do you have weekly goals? What are they? Create your messaging around your goals and objectives.
- 2) Who is your audience? What is it you want them to learn? What information do you think they need? Make sure your messaging is written in a way they will readily absorb.
- 3) Keep your messaging short. Most people will only spend a few seconds looking at the words on your post. Make those words count. A catchy blurb followed by a link with more information can work well.

- 4) Use graphics or images whenever possible. Having something that makes your post stand out, or make it memorable can help increase the clicks, likes, and shares that will make your campaign successful. See the Infographic Instructions To Researchers for tips.
- 5) Make your messaging frequent, but not too frequent. Post something once a day, but not more than once a day in order to create a sense that you are consistent, but not trying to be pushy with your information.
- 6) Reply to comments that are made to your original post (OP). When people know you are responsive, they are more likely to continue interacting with your posts.
- 7) Additionally, for Twitter posts, make sure you use a common hashtag throughout your campaign – something that is easily attributed to your work. Also consider including patient advocacy groups or others from your target audience in your twitter post by typing their Twitter handle (for example, we are @COPDFoundation).
- 8) Follow people/groups who are doing work in a similar field. Most of the time they will follow you back. The more followers, the more opportunities to share your work.
- 9) If you have a blog or newsletter, make sure to link to it from your social media but create a tiny url or bitly to create an easy to use link.
- 10) Ask people to share or retweet your messages. Let people know that you want this information to be shared with as many people as possible.

Blog/E-Newsletter Tips

Most patient advocacy organizations and professional societies have blogs and/or e-newsletters. Before getting started, check out the CONNECT Dissemination Capabilities Directory to identify target organizations and consider if your health system has or would like to start a blog or newsletter of your own. Next, reach out to the target audiences and identify requirements and level of interest in publishing your content.

Most patient advocacy organizations appreciate receiving guest posts but will offer some specific tips for creating content that is easy for them to post. If you are reaching out to multiple organizations, disclose that and be sure to provide customized communications if it is a blog post, as organizations are penalized in their search engine optimization results if they publish identical content as other sites. This is less of a concern for emailed newsletters.

As with the social media tips, we suggest you go through the process of creating an infographic or poster to refine your messaging and call to action prior to creating a blog or newsletter article. Include similar information, but in this format you are able to include some additional information and hyperlinks to background information or relevant resources. Once you do this, consider checking out some existing resources on science blogs such as <http://www.fromthelabbench.com/from-the-lab-bench-science-blog/blogging-tips-for-science-bloggers-from-science-bloggers> or <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-018-01414-6>.

Don't forget, as with everything, it is always best to consult your target audience before and after drafting your content to make sure you got it right!