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THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN UNDERGRADUATE CURRICULUM

“It is imperative that higher education facilities look at innovative teaching methods to engage students in this digital era and enhance their learning.”



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Social media (SoMe) and mobile technology (MT) have been topics of interest to many educators, health professionals and policy developers over the last decade. This year, two editorials in leading nursing journals have described the potential for SoMe in nursing (Jones & Hayter 2013; Ferguson 2013). A recent Australian journal publication further supports the potential of SoMe and in particular Twitter (Wilson, R, et al. 2013). Increasingly, nurses and other health professionals and the general public are actively utilising new technology to improve health and enhance practice (Barton, A 2012)]. To-date, there is limited evidence on the use of information technology and SoMe within the undergraduate nursing curriculum. Today's students have a variety of technologies at their fingertips, from mobile devices to cloud technologies. It is imperative that higher education facilities look at innovative teaching methods to engage students in this digital era and enhance their learning. For the nursing and midwifery profession to innovate and remain current it must connect and collaborate with health care practitioners that exist outside of the traditional classroom. SoMe allows for this method of learning.

In Western Australia, major tertiary teaching public and private hospitals are adopting latest technology to improve the services and facilities that are provided. The University of Notre Dame Australia (UNDA), School of Nursing and Midwifery aims to

produce graduates that not only have sound knowledge and skills as professionals but are prepared to utilise the latest technology and applications. The emphasis and philosophy surrounding our SoMe educational initiative includes students' understanding of the concept of a digital citizen. This is important, as the future graduates competing for graduate entry programs need to recognise the importance of an ethically sound *Digital Footprint*. Nursing is not excluded from this concept (Wilson, R, et al. 2013).

Results of our exploratory survey of first year undergraduate nursing students, undertaken at the Fremantle Campus of UNDA, provide evidence for the curriculum design at the School of Nursing and Midwifery. The aim of the survey was to assess the willingness and preferences of undergraduate nursing students with the use of MT and SoMe. MT is gathering huge momentum in the classroom and nursing education cannot ignore this. There is potential for students to be more productive with their use of MT and to enhance their learning (Leece & Campbell, 2011). The survey was posted on Survey Monkey and students were asked to complete the voluntary survey in the first week of semester.

A 13-item questionnaire was developed for this pilot study. The questions attempted to explore the use of MT and mobile applications by undergraduate nursing students. Other questions included items on gender, age and types of mobile devices and mobile applications.

Information from the survey included the following facts:

- ▶ Out of the 120 participants (a response rate of 72%), 117 were female and three were male.
- ▶ Out of the 120 participants, 96 of the respondents were in the age bracket of 18–24 years old.
- ▶ Out of the 120 students, 91% owned a smartphone or a tablet.
- ▶ 66% of students disagree with the statement 'Health care social media has NO useful role in educating undergraduate students'.
- ▶ 118 participants, agreed with the statement 'I would like to learn about health care social media within the nursing course'.

The results of the survey also indicated that 70% of students agreed that 'they would like to learn to use more apps' and this indicates that tertiary educators could incorporate innovative teaching and learning applications. It suggests to us that the digital native also needs support in application learning.

COMMONLY USED MOBILE APPS BY STUDENTS

NAME OF MOBILE 'APP'	NUMBER
FACEBOOK	90
BLACKBOARD MOBILE	70
SKYPE	54
PDF READER	52
ITUNESU	43
DROPBOX	26
TWITTER	21
IMOVIE	14
EVERNOTE	7

Overall, the results of the survey indicate that tertiary students currently own one mobile device, if not more, and are interested in using latest technology to enhance their learning at university. They are familiar with the use of SoMe and mobile applications and this is a positive for academics as there are a number of innovative applications and SoMe tools that can be used in teaching and engaging undergraduate students. The UNDA School of Nursing and Midwifery has embarked on a larger study that involves all the undergraduate students and their perceptions of MT. The nursing curriculum has been modified to include core units that incorporate health informatics. Academics have also trialled the use of Twitter (#NPD100) and an academic blog (100threehundred.com) to enhance their teaching with positive results.

Due to the success and engagement with our undergraduate nursing students and the Twitter hashtag (#NPD100), the authors conceived and developed a unique conference titled SMART (Social Media Application for Research & Teaching) Care. This was attended by academics, health professionals, students and the general public. It was the first of its kind in addressing the potential of SoMe use in education, research with e-patient and undergraduate student involvement. Speakers ranged from leading SoMe industry experts, a patient advocate to first year undergraduate nursing students showcasing the use of Twitter in their teaching and learning.

Planning is now underway for next years' SMART Care conference. More information and updates can be found on **Twitter #NPD100** or 100threehundred.wordpress.com

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