

effective communication in a digital world

a social media primer for CCNA research trainees

CCNA
Canadian Consortium
on Neurodegeneration
in Aging



CCNV
Consortium canadien en
neurodégénérescence
associée au vieillissement

Training & Capacity Building | Formation et Renforcement des Capacités



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keeping up with social media

Here are a few ways that academics can harness the power of social media:

1. Publicize research and publications

Social media is growing as a widely accepted way for academics to publicize and promote academic research. These new media include posts on Twitter and Facebook, blogs, **podcasts**, video blogs (vlogs), **video abstracts**, and websites (personal and institutional). Published material can be linked to many of these new media, introducing academic work to new audiences. Platforms like Google Scholar allow you to establish a profile, track citations of your work, and alert you to new publications of interest.

Other platforms exclusively for academics include ResearchGate.net and Academia.edu where researchers can set up a profile and post links to published papers, sharing them with a wide network of interested academics (Carrigan, 2016). Many academic journals encourage authors to promote accepted manuscripts using Twitter and Facebook (e.g., *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*) so that articles can be broadcast widely.

2. Develop networks for collaboration and feedback

Graduate students, postdoctoral researchers, and emerging scientists can use social media to build and expand academic networks. For example, on Twitter you can follow colleagues, societies, organizations, or journals with a focus relevant to your own research interests (see the appendix for some suggestions on organizations and people you may wish to follow). Twitter chats using hashtags and live tweeting at conferences are ways of connecting with colleagues and generating conversation. Hashtags can be topical (e.g., #phdchat and #phdlife for PhD Students) or associated with an event or conference, and are created to encourage conversation. Remember to check conference rules before live tweeting because each conference may have different guidelines for how to appropriately attribute ideas to speakers (Carrigan, 2016).

Let's face it; social media is no longer "new territory" on the periphery of our lives like it was only a decade ago. Social media is now one of the most common forms of communication. Social media allows us to connect in more ways, with more people, and more quickly than any other communications medium ever has.

one million

people join social media each day.

That's 12 per second.



(Brandwatch.com, 2016)



3. Inform policy makers, health care stakeholders, and the public

Using social media allows academics to connect with advocacy and special-interest groups, community groups, policy makers, and the public at large. This is one way that social media can be used to close the gap between research findings and people who can put those findings to use (Meisel et al., 2016). Just as important, you can add your voice as a source of credible information on dementia-related topics, whether on your own or on behalf of the institution you're associated with.

Interested in science communication with public reach? An innovative platform to emerge and position itself as a source of factual, evidence-based information is *The Conversation*. *The Conversation* pairs journalists with academics to produce news, analysis, and opinion on a variety of topics including health, medicine, science, and technology.



83%

of online Canadians
are active on at least one
social media platform.

(Pollard, 2016)

On average, internet users have

5.5

social media accounts

(Brandwatch.com, 2016)



overview of the “big four”

Before we discuss how you can begin to create connections with your key audiences, it's important to first familiarize yourself with social media's biggest players and how they differ.



Twitter

? **Twitter** is used to share short, frequent posts called tweets that can contain photos, videos, and links to webpages.

Q Interact on Twitter by @tagging users in your posts, joining focused conversations by using #hashtags, and replying to, retweeting or liking peoples' tweets. Tweets are limited to 280 characters, so brevity is key.

! Avoid saying anything you wouldn't say to a large audience. Everything you post online can be captured in a screen grab and shared without your permission.



Facebook

? **Facebook** is a network of people and organizations where you can discover interesting information and keep in touch with friends and colleagues.

Q Interact on Facebook by liking, sharing, and commenting on posts that interest you. Expand your network by adding new friends, or “liking” pages that you want to follow.

! Remember that everything you post online is a reflection of yourself personally and professionally. Always be courteous and respectful.



Instagram

? **Instagram** is a visual platform where you can view other peoples' photos and videos and post your own.

Q Engage on Instagram by liking and commenting on posts, and search #hashtags to discover new accounts that interest you.

Expand you reach by using relevant #hashtags in your post, geotagging your location, and @tagging users who might like your content.

! Before posting any photos from your professional life, make sure you read and understand your institution's social media policies and photography guidelines.



LinkedIn

? **LinkedIn** is a professional network where you can interact with coworkers, industry colleagues, and employers.

Q Showcase your experience by adding skills, accomplishments, and credentials to your profile.

Engage on LinkedIn by “connecting” with like-minded professionals, joining relevant groups, and sharing content related to your research and academic interests.

! Remember that LinkedIn is meant for professional networking. Treat it like an online interview or meeting space.

One of the simplest ways to begin to use Facebook or LinkedIn is to share a brief summary of a published article with a link to the full publication or write a tweet about your article, including a hashtag and link to the article. Like everything else you author, ensure you credit others by using quotation marks and/or citing them where appropriate.

creating relevant content

Okay, we know this feels a little overwhelming, especially if you're new to social media. Some of you might be wondering how you'll make time for social media in your busy schedule. Here's a little advice from Mark Carrigan (2016), an academic and social media user:

1.

There's no need to be active on all platforms - Pick one where there is a potential audience and use it consistently.

A good place to start is to maintain a regular Twitter account.

2.

Regularly update any personal websites or institutional web pages, linking updates to your social media activity.

3.

Get together with colleagues to set up a group blog or departmental Twitter feed so that the work of posting can be shared.

With a little strategizing up front, you can increase your comfort level and confidence in using social media. A "Content Map" is a simple and useful tool to help get you started – see to the right ▶ to begin.

EXERCISE:

Content Mapping

A content map exercise can help you develop your online identity and guide you through the thought process of turning complex and lengthy information into approachable, appealing social media content.

Who is your audience?

- List the various stakeholder groups you're trying to reach on social media e.g., the public, policy makers, academics, colleagues, etc.

Where can they be reached?

- Where is this audience most likely to be? For example, many professionals use Twitter and LinkedIn, whereas Millennials and Baby Boomers may be more active on Facebook and Instagram.

What do you want them to know?

- Write 2-3 bullet points summarizing the key information that you'd like to share with each audience. As guidance you might craft your messages in response to the question, "Why should I care?" or "What does this mean for me?" from the audience's perspective.

Craft your post

- Based on the content in the above section, craft a (brief) social media post for each audience. Remember to keep your character count to 280 character or less for Twitter.

Visuals

- Images make your social posts stand out in users' news feeds. Do you have a photo or graphic that you can use? It should be eye-catching (pictures of people are most engaging), relevant to the post copy and, ideally, not stock photography.



engagement: becoming a voice in the conversation

Social media is a two-way medium. The most effective social media content is content that contributes to a broader conversation. It's a balance of sharing and listening.

So, imagine yourself at a party, standing in a room alone away from everyone else: You have little opportunity to connect with others unless you move into the common area. Connecting on social media is a lot like being at a party:

1.

Introduce yourself

- Make your social media profiles professional but personal enough to reflect your individual brand. It's ok to have an editorial voice when sharing academic work on social media. This may add value to online conversations or when relationship building.
- Use a clear, professional photo for your profile picture and highlight your professional focus in your bio with a touch of personality.

2.

Invite others into a conversation

- Like in an e-mail, "CC" other users who have an interest in your content by mentioning their accounts using the @ symbol plus their username.
- Use hashtags to insert yourself and your content into relevant conversations/themes/events for greater exposure (e.g., #Alzheimers, #dementia, and #EndAlzheimers among many others).

3.

Build relationships

- "Social" media is intended to be just that. When you can, take the time to engage with others by "liking", sharing, or commenting on their content. Recognize the contributions of others to online conversations, and they'll be more likely to do the same for you.
- Start by following individuals/organizations/groups with similar interests. Follow your colleagues, friends, organizations, and any other accounts that represent the audiences you outlined in your content map.

4.

Develop networks

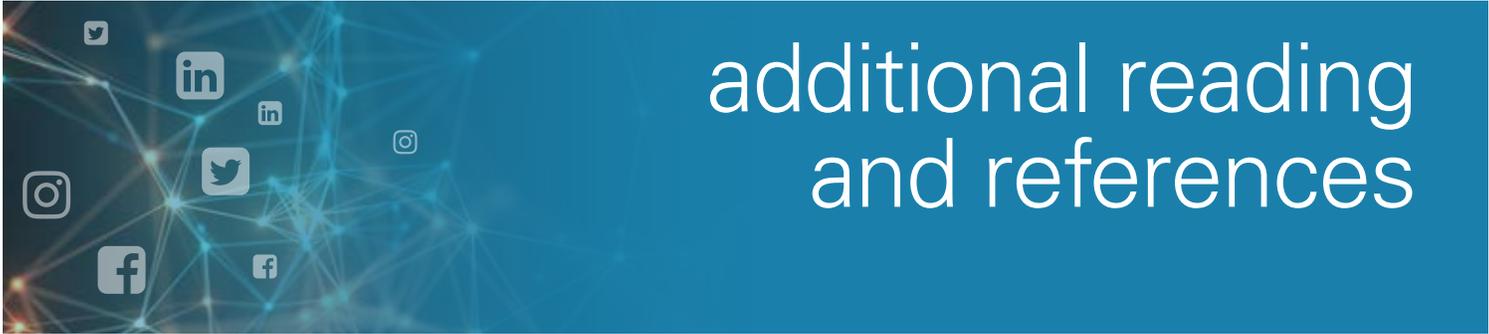
- Find academics who are also using social media and use hashtags or create new ones to build trackable conversations with them for collaboration and feedback.
- Live tweeting at conferences (if permitted) can lead to new professional relationships and can encourage engagement and conversation on a topic with international faculty or the public.
- Some social media platforms (e.g., Facebook and LinkedIn) offer group functions, both private and public, where you can connect with fellow academics and researchers to have content-focused conversations, share files, and have group discussions.

5.

Potential pitfalls

- You may encounter internet “trolls” on social media platforms that seek out confrontation, often with no real objective other than to argue. They post inflammatory, irrelevant, or offensive comments online. There are many recommendations about how to deal with trolls. Here are a few tips we’ve assembled from the experts:
 - Ignore them: Trolls thrive on attention. Avoid engaging with these users and learn how to block them from interacting with you if they become persistent.
 - On most moderated sites bullying is not allowed. For example, bullying, harassment, or posting abusive content on Facebook is a violation of their Community Standards policies and you can use the Report link near the posted content to report it. Twitter also has rules against making abusive comments, including harassment and intimidation.
 - If you are being harassed online consider informing trusted senior colleagues about it.
- There is always a chance that the information you publicize or post could be misused or taken out of context.
- Other risks include critical or rude comments from people who disagree with you. One academic has suggested that it’s important to be thoughtful and respectful in your communications and to be aware that you are representing your organization, if choosing to respond (A. Clark, personal communication, September 28, 2017).

There’s no doubt that social media is quickly becoming part of academic work. While the risks are concerning, one academic (A. Clark, personal communication, September 28, 2017) has suggested that they’re similar to any type of communication (e.g., speaking publically or sending an e-mail). Once you hit “send” the information is difficult to retract. While you want to be thoughtful about how you’re using social media, the benefits are also numerous: expanding your professional network by connecting with colleagues, students, and international faculty; publicizing your work more widely by linking to published papers from personal or institutional websites, or tweeting about an accepted paper; and closing the research to practice gap by using social media to reach policy makers and to raise awareness about an import issue. Most important, if you’re concerned about time, pick one platform and use it consistently.



additional reading and references

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Keller, B., Labrique, A., Jain, K.M., Pekosz, A., Levine, O. (2014) Mind the gap: Social media engagement by public health researchers. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 16(1), e8.

Meisel, Z., Gollust, S., Grande, D. (2016) Translating research for health policy decisions: Is it time for researchers to join social media? *Academic Medicine*, 91, 1341-1343.

Mollett, A., Brumley, C., Gilson, C., & Williams, S. (2017). *Communicating Your Research with Social Media*. London, United Kingdom: SAGE.

CCNA-Affiliated Social Media Resources

If you'd like to stay up-to-date on CCNA news and events, follow CCNA-affiliated individuals and teams, or get the latest updates on [#Alzheimers](#) and [#dementia](#) research, policy, and care, here is a sample of organizations, journals, and people you may wish to follow.

Disclaimer: Although we're sharing these contacts as examples of organizations and people to follow, the views and opinions expressed on these sites do not necessarily reflect those of the CCNA or the Training and Capacity Building Program. Therefore, we cannot be held responsible for the accuracy or reliability of information posted by parties other than the CCNA organization and the Training and Capacity Building Program.

For your safety, never include your phone number, e-mail, address or other personal information in a post. Your comments are visible to all.

CCNA ACCOUNTS

Twitter

Canadian Consortium on Neurodegeneration in Aging
[@ccna_ccnv](#)

CCNA Training and Capacity Building Program
[@CCNA_Trainees](#)

Instagram

Canadian Consortium on Neurodegeneration in Aging
[@CCNA_CCNV](#)

CCNA on Vimeo

<https://vimeo.com/channels/ccna>

CCNA TEAMS ON TWITTER

CCNA Team 20 – Issues in Dementia Care for Rural and Indigenous Populations
[@I_CAARE](#)

CCNA Team 17 – Interventions at the Sensory and Cognitive Interface
[@ccna17_ccnv17](#)

CCNA INVESTIGATORS ON TWITTER

Kenneth Rockwood – Theme 3 Co-Lead, Quality of Life
[@Krockdoc](#)

Simon Duchesne – Team 9 Member, Developing New Biomarkers
[@SimonDuchesne](#)

Pierre Bellec – Team 9 Co-Lead, Developing New Biomarkers
[@pierre_bellec](#)

Maxime Descoteaux – Team 9 Member, Developing New Biomarkers
[@maxdescoteaux](#)

Mallar Chakravarty – Team 9 Member, Developing New Biomarkers
[@mallarchkrvrt1](#)

CCNA-Affiliated Social Media Resources

ALZHEIMER'S AND DEMENTIA RELATED SOCIETIES, PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS, AND JOURNALS

Alzheimer Society of Canada

Twitter

[@AlzCanada](#)

YouTube Channel

<https://www.youtube.com/user/theAlzheimerSociety/videos>

Instagram

[alzheimercanada](#)

Blog

www.alzheimersocietyblog.ca

Alzheimer's Association

Twitter

[@alzassociation](#)

YouTube Channel

<https://www.youtube.com/user/actionalz>

Instagram

[alzassociation](#)

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Canadian Geriatrics Society

[@CanGeriSoc](#)

American Geriatrics Society

[@AmerGeriatrics](#)

American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry

[@GeriPsyc](#)

JOURNALS

Neurology Today

[@NeurologyToday](#)

Alzheimer's & Dementia: The Journal of the Alzheimer's Association

[@alzdemjournals](#)

American Journal of Psychiatry

[@AmJPsychiatry](#)

Journal of the American Geriatrics Society

[@AGSJournal](#)

Lancet Neurology

[@TheLancetNeuro](#)

Neurology Journal

[@GreenJournal](#)

Nature Reviews Neurology

[@NatRevNeurol](#)

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