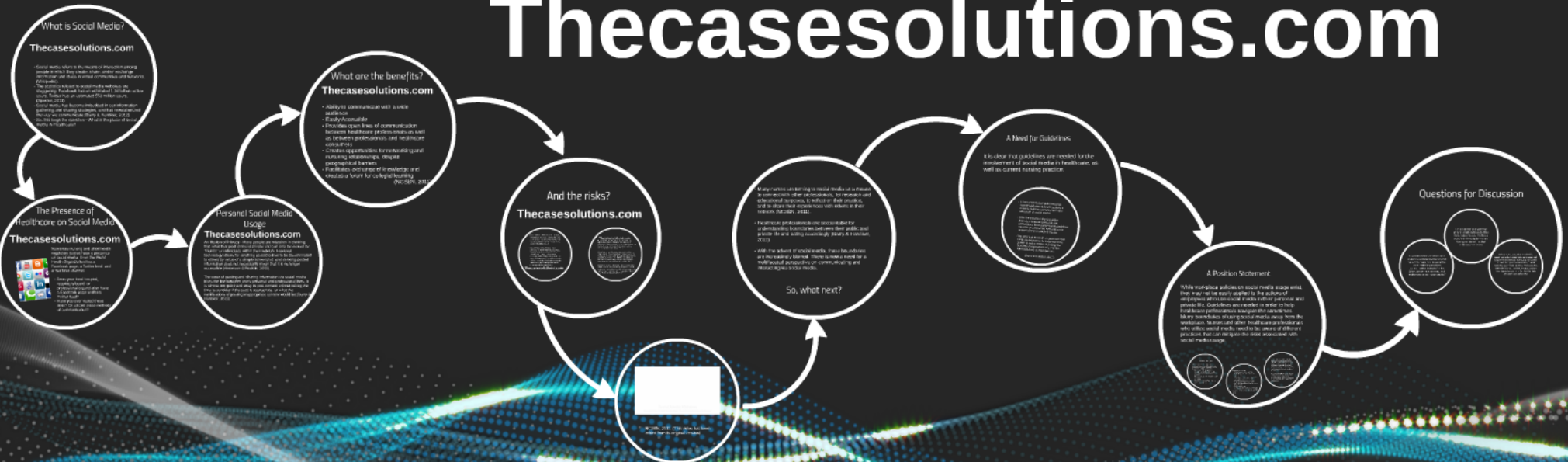


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Social Media in Health Care

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What is Social Media?

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- Social media refers to the means of interaction among people in which they create, share, and/or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks. (Wikipedia).
- The statistics related to social media websites are staggering. Facebook has an estimated 1.26 billion active users. Twitter has an estimated 550 million users. (Spector, 2011)
- Social media has become imbedded in our information gathering and sharing strategies, and has revolutionized the way we communicate (Barry & Hardiker, 2012).
- So, this begs the question - What is the place of social media in Healthcare?

The Presence of Healthcare on Social Media

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Numerous nursing and allied health regulatory bodies have a presence on social media. Even the World Health Organization has a Facebook page, a Twitter feed, and a YouTube channel.

- Does your local hospital, regulatory board, or professional organization have a Facebook page and/or a Twitter feed?
- Have you ever visited these sites? Or utilized these methods of communication?

Personal Social Media Usage

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An Illusion of Privacy - Many people are mistaken in thinking that what they post online is private and can only be viewed by “friends” or individuals within their network. However, technology allows for anything posted online to be disseminated to others by virtue of a simple screenshot, and deleting posted information does not necessarily mean that it is no longer accessible (Anderson & Puckrin, 2011).

The ease of posting and sharing information via social media blurs the line between one’s personal and professional lives. It is almost too quick and easy to post content without taking the time to consider if the post is appropriate, or what the ramifications of posting inappropriate content would be (Barry & Hardiker, 2011).



What are the benefits?

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- Ability to communicate with a wide audience
 - Easily Accessible
 - Provides open lines of communication between healthcare professionals as well as between professionals and healthcare consumers
 - Creates opportunities for networking and nurturing relationships, despite geographical barriers
 - Facilitates exchange of knowledge and creates a forum for collegial learning
- (NCSBN, 2011)

And the risks?

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- Information in electronic form is easily distributed, archived, and downloaded, so the person posting the information has little control over who sees it and uses it (NCSBN, 2011).

- Social media sites have privacy controls, however, the default privacy settings may allow others to view information thought to be posted privately. Additionally, in legal matters, even if information has not been made publicly available, if it is relevant to the issues in court, it can be disclosed (Anderson & Puckrin, 2011).

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- May allow for unprofessional behavior such as privacy breaches and bullying and criticism of colleagues. Many employers check social networking profiles looking for misconduct or inappropriate behavior (Oklaholma Nurse, 2013).

- Public trust of healthcare professionals can be compromised. There have been many stories in the media about nurses posting inappropriate content to social media. In fact, even with the patients best interests at heart, nurses can contravene privacy laws by posting to social media (NCSBN, 2011).

- A general lack of understanding surrounding of the power of social networks exists. Postings to social media sites cannot be easily deleted, as copies can exist on search engines, or in the electronic files of other friends (Barry & Hardiker, 2011).

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