

WELCOME TO THE TWITTERVERSE – PALLIATIVE CARE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Until recently I was a social media sceptic: I'm not that interested in what my friends had for breakfast let alone the latest blunder from a footballer or B grade celebrity tantrum. A teenage patient when trying to explain twitter once said to me "you wouldn't get it, you're too old". So when a colleague and "senior" palliative care physician recently suggested I get on the twitter I was dubious. However I am now a convert to the social media revolution.

There is a serious academic side to twitter and a growing body of evidence about the role and benefit of this and other similar social media platforms in health care. I use twitter solely for educational and professional purposes. Since joining twitter I can now efficiently and easily stay up to date with what's happening in palliative care locally and globally. When someone asks if I've seen such and such an article the answer now is generally yes. Before, staying up to date meant scanning multiple journals for interesting and stimulating articles. Now, I open up twitter and see what colleagues, organisations and journals from across the world are reading and tweeting. I can hear about educational events and funding opportunities hot off the press. I can participate and observe regular international discussions on key topics in palliative care. However, I'm still too shy to tweet live to Tony Jones on Q&A.

For me, the benefits in Twitter are in

- seeing important palliative papers as soon as they are out
- learning about current and future research projects
- gaining a better patient/carer perspective
- meeting people I would not otherwise
- hearing about interesting stuff from other fields, and
- powerfully enhancing the conference experience. I can even 'be' at conferences without being there!

Not sure about joining twitter? Here are 10 tips for how to join the "twitterverse". (Adapted from <http://palliverse.com/category/ideas/>)

1. What is everyone talking about? Just jump on at twitter.com and have a look. Search for a couple of hashtags that are interesting to you. You could try #palliative or #hpmglobal (hospice and palliative medicine global).
2. What is this # thing? A hashtag is a way that people mark the topic of their tweet.
3. Join up. Choose a user name or "handle" e.g. @JohnSmith. You can tell it's a username as it starts with "@".
4. Follow some people. To follow someone, click on their handle then press "follow". You will then see all the tweets they make. Some of the people I'm currently following are:
 - @palliverse - a network of palliative care practitioners moderated by Australians
 - @AAHPM – international palliative care association
 - @PallMedJ – Palliative medicine journal
 - @CareSearch – Australian palliative care evidence based practice siteand a bunch of other palliative care 'celebrities' and organisations both locally and internationally.
5. Check out some chats. Try #hpmglobal at 22:00 AEST on Monday nights and #hpm on Thursdays or #hcsmanz (health care social media Australia/New Zealand) at 20:00 AEST Sunday nights. Just type the hashtag into the search bar at the appropriate time, and viola! A group of people around the world come together at this prearranged time to discuss a predetermined topic. All their tweets will be marked with the relevant hashtag.

Acknowledgements: Thank you to @soniaf and the @palliverse team (www.palliverse.com) for connecting me with the benefits of twitter.

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DECISION ASSIST PALLIATIVE CARE PHONE ADVISORY SERVICE

The Decision Assist Palliative Care Phone Advisory Service is taking calls on 1300 668 908 and is available to medical practitioners and staff working in aged care 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Registered nurses specialising in palliative care are on the line to answer and triage calls, with medical specialists available as required. The type of support ranges from medication and symptom management, to psychosocial support, bereavement advice and information on education.



With best wishes for a Happy Christmas and
a safe and relaxing New Year –
Jade, Greg, Penny, Regina, Lawrence, Chien & Bernadette

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OCT/NOV/DEC 2014