Luc and colleagues\(^1\) report results of the experience of The Thoracic Surgery Social Media Network (TSSMN), a social media collaborative formed in 2015 by The Annals of Thoracic Surgery and The Journal of Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgery. Using the Twitter handle @TSSMN and hashtag #TSSMN, the authors show that since its inception, #TSSMN has generated 17,181 total tweets, 2,100 users, and 32,226,280 impressions.\(^1\) In addition, thirteen 1-hour TweetChats, involving global leaders in the cardiothoracic community, drew 489 participants, 5195 total tweets, and 17,297,708 total impressions. As such, the authors demonstrate that the online community generated around @TSSMN and #TSSMN enhances the ability of the journals to connect with their readership and should be commended for their detailed report.

Critical to the success of TSSMN were the use of delegates representing a range of cardiothoracic subspecialties with broad geographic representation. With a combined following of 52,983 users, TSSMN delegates were able to widely disseminate new, original journal articles while engaging wide-ranging discussion through broad engagement with the social media community. Furthermore, use of featured articles that were open access likely allowed for much broader participation in discussion by allowing universal access regardless of financial or geographic background. Given social media’s permanence and widespread reach, the journals’ push to provide a channel for open-access, transparent, and critical appraisal from end users may, arguably, make social media forums the best avenues for postpublication peer review while expanding perspectives and leading to collaboration.

Although the content of the article is not traditionally thought of as “science,” the scientific focus of any journal should be to study anything that affects care, and social media is of major importance in the dissemination of medical information today. With more than 2246 followers and a new follower accumulation of 45 users a month, the authors have demonstrated TSSMN’s ability to foster a forum that guides journal and information growth.

Recent studies showing the positive correlation of journal Twitter activity to impact factor\(^2\) and correlation between social media and citation rates\(^3\) lend support to the continued active presence of journals on Twitter. In addition, with the help of advocacy groups, the journals’ online presence and the online presence of leaders in the field can be used to help stymie or correct medical misinformation propagation\(^4,5\) while improving patient care and changing the perception of surgery as cryptic or esoteric.

One notable limitation of the study, however, is the inability to differentiate whether social media attention, generated in the form of tweet impressions, followers, or other social media metrics, represented negative or positive attention. More research is needed to better define social media attention with article reads, article-level metrics, citations, and journal impact factor. Albeit, while the authors have shown TSSMN is uniquely placed, expansion to other social media platforms will allow the journals to further influence information, education, and collaboration paradigms into the future.
References


