

The Dermatology–Social media–Dermatologist continuum!

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While many revolutions in the field of communication have come and gone, none have been as disruptive as social media. Social media, so powerful that we talk of it in singularity, is an umbrella term encompassing various technologies, interfaces and platforms that facilitate the sharing of ideas and information amongst people. This is reflected, statistically, by the 495 crore people who use social media, accounting for 61.95% of the world's population, a number which has seen exponential growth in the post-COVID 19 era.^{1,2} The field of dermatology is no alien to the revolution with social media being used for healthcare information, community outreach, networking, reputation management, brand building, patient aggregation and so on.

The first-use credit for social media in the realm of dermatology goes to a San Diego–based dermatologist by the name of Dr. Jeffrey Benabio,³ who ran a successful dermatology blog for many years. Since then, the specialty of dermatology, including individuals, departments and even residency programmes, have relied heavily on platforms like Instagram,⁴ Facebook, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, YouTube and TikTok, to name a few. The ability to relay factual data in real time is what continues to make social media so powerful and unique. Patients have also benefitted from an era of empowerment, where information equivocality has replaced the erstwhile information polarisation towards caregivers alone. The well-informed patient can be a double-edged sword for a dermatologist – with informed decisions by the former being the boon and mistrust of the latter's recommendations which is the bane of the said information overload.⁵

IJDVL has been at the forefront of academic publishing, pioneering the use of social media to connect national and

international researchers for collaborative research. The journal's handles on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and Twitter have helped engage readers and researchers alike with the latest editions, key articles and pearls of wisdom.⁶ This has added IJDVL to the illustrious international journal brigade that has commanded a strong online presence over the past decade. In addition, the editorial initiative of running podcasts featuring outstanding original research from each issue has been a resounding success so far. These are archived meticulously on the IJDVL website.⁷ In addition, IJDVL is one the few journals to boast of a plain language summary for articles which is intended for consumption by lay readers.

From a dermatologist's standpoint, social media can be employed for peer reviewing, case discussions, innovation, community support, reputation management, information dissemination, networking, brand building, patient aggregation and academic research.⁵ As with any technology, there are pros and cons with regard to the social media–dermatology–dermatologist continuum.

The pros to social media are innumerable and myriad. Information dissemination was and is the prime facie as far as social media goes. It started with a blog, progressed to web pages and articles, podcasts and now stories and reels which can be used for an engaging burst of information. New treatments, virtual procedures, pre- and post-procedure status and such can be addressed on these platforms, in an increasingly winsome manner. This, in turn, leads to patient awareness and education. Reputation management by virtue of patient and peer feedback is made possible by leveraging social media and the ensuing credibility helps in brand and image building to further position oneself as an expert in the

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field. This validation can be cemented further by publishing research, professional achievements and sharing expertise in a niche area of dermatology. Social media may also be used to connect with peers in the field, mentorship, brainstorming for innovations and ideas, discussing a challenging case or even sharing a new management approach. This helps keep one's skill set updated with the latest in the field. Social media platforms have also been used for online consultation and even for patient aggregation. Finally, patient recruitment for major clinical trials can also be done via online platforms.^{5,8,9}

Every coin has two sides and social media is not devoid of its banes. Due to lack of peer-reviewed content and misinformation galore, social media often serves as a breeding ground for pseudoscience. It is incumbent upon us dermatologists to elevate our roles and proactively contribute with evidence-based content to counterbalance the enticing dissemination of information propagated by influencers. Reputation management can go south, and credibility can take a hit, if due care is not administered regards to the professional conduct, one projects online. The same patients that build brands with good reviews can destroy them with scathing ones, hence making social media the perfect example of a double-edged sword. Social media may also attract undue medicolegal attention, if patient confidentiality is breached or privacy violated, in any format. Not to mention data theft, data leaks, identity thefts and other security issues. Lastly, the allure of social media can distract from one's primary focus, leading to loss of productivity.^{5,8,9}

When harnessed ethically and properly, social media can make all the difference in a world that is consumed online. When used inappropriately and without boundaries, the outcome may be catastrophic. By employing best practices, we can optimise the use of social media to our advantage, both individually and collectively, and make significant strides forward. As Professor Murad Alam poignantly said, 'Social media is a tool, and like any tool, it can be used for

good or bad. It's up to us to use it wisely.' In the same spirit, IJDVL commands academic prestige by serving the second largest dermatology body in the world (IADVL) and is committed to leveraging social media as a tool to engage with its stakeholders, disseminate research and educate readers. IJDVL encourages association members to participate in all its activities, on all platforms, to provide feedback and suggestions. We are committed to enhance visibility, impact and reach in the realm of dermatology by embracing social media.

Long live IJDVL! And Long live IADVL!

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Editor-in-Chief and Social Media Editors

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