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Health Education: The Power of the Podcast

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Introduction

Various strategies have been utilized by nurses to bring health education to community members. Role play, radio, and television (public service announcements), face to face meetings, printed literature and focus group are some of the strategies that have been used with varying degrees of success.

Advances in technology have increased the types of tools available to offer health education. Social media has been used to bring information to a variety of types of community members. Zoom, GoToMeeting, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat and TikTok are some of the newest technological and social media platforms employed to communicate health education and information. The Podcast in various formats is one of the newest techniques to bring accessible education to communities of interest.

Purpose

Given that many people are not familiar with the use of social media, the purpose of this paper is to explain and explore the various types of social media that can be used for education including the podcast. Within the description of the podcast the authors used the format to inform women, particularly women of color, regarding higher perinatal morbidity and mortality rates for different racial and ethnic groups. The podcast allowed sharing of pertinent information to representative audiences.

Types of Social Media Platforms

There are many types of social media in use today. They are a means of communication between individuals and groups. Communication can be done virtually face to face or through written communication using several devices either static or mobile. Social media that can be adapted for education include Videoconferencing, Facebook, Twitter, Blogs, Vlogs, and Podcasts.

Media Definitions

Videoconferencing

Go to Meeting, Zoom, Webex, Microsoft Teams

Go to Meeting, Zoom, WebEx, and Microsoft teams are examples of videoconferencing. Singh and Awasthi [1] define the various types of video conferencing:

1. Go to Meeting is web-based online software utilized for remote meetings, sharing screens and video conferencing.
2. Zoom is the most popular application of videoconferencing. Some of the excellent attributes of Zoom are the screen sharing, screen recording, team chats and searchable history.
3. Web Ex provides the user with the ability to start/join meetings instantly without the need for advance scheduling. The application makes it easier for everyone to join the meetings.
4. Microsoft Teams is a highly utilized platform. It has the ability for the user to customize backgrounds for their video conferencing making it more appealing.

Facebook

Facebook is a social network tool which is utilized for sharing information and connecting with others [2]. Facebook was conceived by Mark Zuckerberg to help college students identify social networks at their location and has millions of users [3].

Twitter

There are several video collaboration/videoconferencing tools used for remote communication. Twitter is a micro blogging and social network service, using short texts (limit: 140 characters) as their posts [4]. The Twitter website asks "What are you doing? and "What is happening? And allows users to carry on a public-web-based asynchronous conversations [5].

E-mail

E-mail or electronic mail is an "asynchronous communication medium, not requiring the recipient of a message to be coordinated in time or pace with the sender" [6].

Blog/Vlog

Pancawardhani, Sumarini, & Prasetyo [7] in their paper on the utilization of learning media provide definitions of blog and vlog. The authors state that blog is a mixed term which combines the words for web and log. They go on to clarify that…. A blog is a web page that "contains multimedia comments and hyperlinks" (p. 138). A vlog is a video blog. It uses video as an intermediary mechanism for delivering messages with text with audio being the primary source.

Podcast

A Podcast is defined as "a method of distributing multimedia files

such as audio or video programs over the internet for playback on mobile devices and personal computers" [8]. Podcasting has become an important communication vehicle for celebrities, educators, and the public. Similar to a privately created radio show, a podcast is an auditory or visual program that is available to the listener as an asynchronous recording [9]. In the Mid-2000's, Steve Jobs described podcasting as "TiVo for the Radio" [10]. It offers the listener an alternative to reading a book on a topic or viewing material on a screen [10]. Although copyright laws apply to podcast content, they are free from other government regulations. Because podcasts don't rely on ratings, the topics presented run from silly to serious academic topics (ascpskincare.com). An audio podcast is saved as an MP.3 file while a video podcast is saved as an MP.4 file [11]. This paper discusses primarily audio podcasts.

A major benefit of podcasts is that they can be accessed on mobile devices, such as phones and tablets. Apps such as iTunes, google play, stitcher, and Spotify, are used to download, and listen to podcasts on both Apple and Android devices (ascpskincare.com). Edison Research followed the evolution of podcasting from 2006 through 2017 and they found that consumer familiarity with podcasting increased from 22% in 2006 to 60% in 2017. They estimated that in 2017, 112 million monthly listeners used podcasts. The portability of Smartphones is postulated to be the reason for this growth [12]. Currently Apple Podcasts has listings for over 1,000,000 active Podcasts with over 50 billion cumulative episodes having been downloaded [10].

Podcasting has become an especially effective way of sharing scholarly and academic information. Podcasts have been used in education in place of in-person class lectures, as a way to provide high quality professional educational materials, [13] as a replacement for student lectures [14], and as a way to expand graduate nurses access to Transformational learning material [9]. Harter, [12], asserts that podcasting connects scholars, health care providers, patients, families and the public to illness and healthcare information. Harter [12], further states that the storytelling inherent in podcasting connects with its audience by building empathy with the material in a personal listening experience. Podcasting allows scholarly topics to take on a multi-sensory form and connect academics to a wider audience [12]. Because podcasts do not require a physical space such as a classroom or lecture hall, listeners can choose their own acoustic space to contemplate the information provided, making the experience more personal [12].

Faculty have embraced podcasting as an effective way to present the vast quantity of material that must be taught, especially to graduate nursing students [9]. The need to teach smarter and faster and with more efficient resources is one motivation for integrating technology into graduate nursing education. The need for asynchronous education that includes all learning styles and geographic barriers, have faculty embracing the cost-effective podcast as a way to disseminate course lectures, case studies, supplemental materials and life skills advice [9].

Developing a Podcast

From their beginning, podcasts have appealed to educators who seek to express their creativity and share their unique knowledge of topics in a digital format [10]. Casares [10], reports that common reasons for starting a podcast are a desire to share expertise, engage listeners, and to assist learners by creating educational content that is meaningful to the listener [10]. Podcasting can also be used as a powerful advocacy tool to address the unmet needs of a vulnerable population or underserved audience [10]. In recent years the ethnic and racial backgrounds of podcasters have become more diverse, leading to development of more novel forms and styles of production [10].

The new podcaster will need to develop the topic and format for their podcast. For example, will the podcast be a simple conversation with the listener on the chosen topic, such as a course lecture, or will the podcast be a platform to introduce the listener to experts on the topic? Whatever the type of format chosen, the podcaster, should prepare a script or detailed outline of the proposed content for the podcast. This helps prevent the podcaster from becoming lost during the recording and resorting to "ums or okays" which can be distracting to the listener [15]. The podcaster will also need to obtain or have access to good quality microphones and a recording device. The microphone can be part of a headset or free standing. There should be a separate microphone for each person participating in the recording [16]. Recording and editing software, such as the free program, Audacity, or Apple GarageBand, Dreamweaver, or Microsoft Movie Maker, will help "clean up" the recordings and take the pressure off the host and guest to be perfect while recording. If the podcaster intends to add music to the recording, they must be sure to observe all copyright law [17] The podcast host and any guests should practice presenting the content before recording to smooth over any nervousness that may accompany the recording process [15].

Once the podcast is recorded and any editing completed, it must be disseminated to the intended audience. If it is a course lecture or interview, it can be loaded up into the online course platform used by the academic institution such as Blackboard, Moodle or Coursera. If the audience is outside of a course, then the podcast will need a hosting service. Academics should check with their institutions, which may be able to provide this service at no cost. However, hosting services, such as apple podcasts, google play, stitcher, buzz sprout, pod bean or Lybsyn, generally charge a small fee. Once the podcast is posted to the internet by the hosting service, it is ready to be streamed or downloaded and enjoyed [11].

Legal and Ethical Considerations

It is important that any podcaster avoid pitfalls associated with sharing information concerning health care related topics [10]. Podcasts should include a disclaimer that the information provided is not intended to replace actual healthcare treatment from a qualified provider, nor is the information presented necessarily a complete discussion of the issue. Listeners should also be given any basic emergency instructions such as when to seek assistance at the emergency department [10]. Also, any funding or sponsorship of the Podcast should be disclosed to the listeners at the beginning of the episode [10].

While podcasting upholds healthcare providers ethical responsibilities to assist consumers to be as autonomous as possible when choosing their treatment, this should be balanced with the principle of beneficence, or the mandate to "do no harm" [10]. Healthcare podcasters should demonstrate the utmost professionalism in their podcasts, endeavoring to provide the best possible information and indicating when information presented is not a fact but an opinion or may be influenced by outside considerations [10]. Podcasters should also refrain from offering advice to listeners that may contact them through social media [10].

How Podcasts are received by Community Members, Students, and Faculty

Overall, podcasting, as a mechanism to deliver educational content, seems to be positively accepted by both developers of content and the learners. Undergraduate nursing students have generally reported that they benefited from a better understanding of the material when it is presented as a podcast and that the podcasts enhanced their ability to apply the knowledge they acquired. They especially felt that podcasts enhanced their communication skills, study skills, critical thinking, and stress management skills [18]. Students liked that the podcasts were always available and that they could listen to them anytime and at any speed they preferred [18]. When podcasts were used as replacements for classroom time in traditional face-to face courses, some students reported not learning as effectively from podcasts when compared to traditional classroom methods [18]. Some students saw the Podcasts as extra work, especially when they

contained assignment material such as case studies and preferred to receive this information in the classroom setting [9].

Riddell [14] conducted a phenomenological study of medical residents to determine how they interacted with educational podcasts and garnered perceptions of how the podcasts were integrated into the student's listening experiences so that the faculty could develop a template to help them design more effective educational podcasts [14]. They developed 5 canons from their research for developing effective educational podcasts. They are:

1. Educational Podcasts should be closely aligned with the student's clinical/classroom experience.

    a. Clinically/classroom relevant podcasts engaged students and helped them absorb the content more readily.

    b. Students expressed a desire for podcasts to clearly spell out key points.

2. Educational Podcasts should be arranged efficiently.

    a. Students appreciated podcasts that didn't waste time getting to the point.

3. Educational Podcasts should be presented in an engaging style.

    a. Students appreciated the use of humor and sound effects when used to emphasize a point.

    b. Students appreciated an expert telling stories about issues that arose in their practice. This helped them remember key points better.

4. Educational Podcasts should recap key points to "drive home" the topic.

5. Educational Podcasts should be delivered in an engaging and professional manner.

    a. Poor sound quality made some podcasts unlistenable.

    b. Students preferred shorter podcasts of no more than 15 minutes. Longer podcasts were considered overwhelming [14].

Community Education Podcast Procedure

Nursing faculty at a local university wanted to provide service to neighboring communities who lacked access to health services and health education. In consultation with the representative from the Southland Coalition (a group who delivers community mental health and wellness assistance) the decision was made to do an educational podcast on a topic of interest to the community. After a group discussion, the topic selected was "Empowering Women of Color in Maternal Health Care". The speakers were five faculty, one midwife, one OB hospitalist, and one doula. A script was written, and the format chosen was Restream through Facebook Live. The podcast was implemented for 45 minutes with 15 minutes for questions. It was set up like a panel discussion with each participant having 15 minutes each to speak.

Results of Podcast

Listeners included faculty from other educational institutions, the public, students, and other community members. Approximately three hundred people viewed the presentation. Comments were extremely positive as was the feedback. One of the most prominent comments was to have more podcasts on women's health, especially on menopause.

Implications for Health Care Workers/Educator

As a result of the podcast the community was inspired to request local government representatives to safeguard women's maternal health experiences (especially in minority communities). This took the form of state congressional bill on Maternal safety.

Conclusion

Providing health information via social media such as the podcast is an effective way of educating the public. The technology also makes access to the presentation easy. The technology is readily available via computer, cell phone, tablet, and watch. As technology involved in presenting topics via social media becomes more common it will be used more widely for all types of education: The public, students, public servants and educators themselves.

Conflicts of Interest: According to the writers, there is no conflict of interest.

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