**#pandemicpedagogy: using twitter for knowledge exchange**

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**What problem was addressed?**

The COVID-19 crisis has resulted in homeworking becoming the norm internationally. As a result, international, national and institutional medical education conferences, workshops and seminars have been cancelled or postponed indefinitely. Consequently, the opportunity for knowledge exchange and networking has been reduced. Hull York Medical School runs a medical education research unit with associated masters and PhD programmes that rely on conferences as opportunities for postgraduate students to learn from others in the field, showcase their research and innovative pedagogy, as well as network for future employment.

**What was tried?**

In order to continue to develop and learn from the wider community, the medical education unit at Hull York Medical School decided to build on its use of social media during COVID closures. In particular, Twitter was utilised as a platform by which to engage the wider academic community in discourse around research and pedagogy. Two streams of work were undertaken: (1) the creation of short videos to showcase doctoral students work that would have been shared at conferences and, (2) the creation of a series of live Twitter chats (#pandemicpedagogy) to engage the wider community in an exchange of ideas around adapting teaching during the pandemic. Trial chats were established before the development of a specific hashtag #pandemicpedagogy. Events were advertised through the unit Twitter account and via associated societies. Guest moderators were invited from international institutions in order to facilitate a global discussion and to encourage a broader range of participants. Each event had a specific theme such as anatomy, empathy, identity or clerkships. Timing for a global audience was the most significant obstacle- in light of this, the event timings were staggered, in order to facilitate international engagement. Due to some events occurring out-of-hours, electronic calendar invites were sent to invited moderators to ensure events remained on their radar. All guest moderators were publicly acknowledged for their contributions. The themed conversations were arranged each week of the university closure, with a different PhD student at the helm depending on their specialism. Participation ranged from 10 to 30 contributors per discussion.

**What was learned?**

Establishment of these events helped to boost morale of the postgraduate students and staff within the unit. The focus on sharing and creating collective knowledge provided a sense of community during physical isolation from peers and colleagues. Uptake from moderators was high and feedback was overwhelmingly positive. Timing events was a barrier to maximising participation, however, where an audience in a particular time zone could not be accommodated, a repeat of the event was offered where possible. New collaborations were established as a result of the connections made. Discussions were stimulating, and Twitter proved to be a fun and useful platform despite the limitations of character limits on individual tweets. Participants engaged in bursts of conversation, with multiple tweets in reply to each prompt or question. Numbering questions and prompts helped track replies and maintain the discussion flow. Lessons learned from early events included having some tweets drafted ready to send to serve as discussion prompts, having moderators logged in on multiple devices in order to keep up with the speed of responses, recommending the use of Tweetdeck for a more easily coordinated moderation, and ensuring that the hashtags were used as frequently as possible to allow the audience to maintain a view of the content developed. Metrics such as new followers, likes, impressions and retweets demonstrated immediate impact. Students found conversations useful for thinking around their subject area. There was excitement, and ‘fangirling’, when notable names in the field replied or retweeted – this offered students a morale boost and was a good proxy for conference networking.