**ABSTRACT**

Objectives — To analyze how medical conference attendees are using Twitter hashtags at medical conferences and to benchmark the use of Twitter hashtags at medical conferences.

Methods — Conference Authority (MedThink, Raleigh, NC) was used to identify the top medical conferences by attendance in 2011 for five therapeutic categories (general medicine, oncology, gastroenterology/hepatology, cardiology/vascular diseases, and infectious diseases). Conference Authority data are based on Society for Academic Medicine Conference (SAMC) data and attendees to conference proceedings. Conference Authority was used to identify the top five conferences in each therapeutic category. Hashtags were identified by conference attendees during the conference. Radian6 (Salesforce.com, San Francisco, CA) was used to record the number of conference-related hashtags used by conference attendees.

Results — Of the top five medical conferences in each therapeutic category, Oncology/Hematology conferences had the highest total hashtag reach (mean 37,105, SD 8,540), followed by Cardiology/vascular diseases (mean 3,480, SD 653), General Medicine (mean 3,194, SD 291), Infectious Diseases (mean 2,209, SD 718), and Gastroenterology/Hepatology (mean 1,035, SD 397). (A) The majority of hashtag activity was active in two therapeutic areas: Oncology/Hematology conferences (n=5) and Cardiology/vascular diseases (n=6). Oncology/Hematology conferences had a greater percentage of total hashtag activity (73%) than other specialties. In contrast, Cardiology/vascular diseases had 48% of its total activity associated with the #ddw11 hashtag used by conference attendees.

Conclusions — Hashtag activity at medical conferences varies by specialty. Oncology/Hematology conferences had the greatest number of hashtag-related activities per conference attendees. Social media data have become an accepted tool for measuring the effectiveness of communication at medical conferences. Conference attendees are using Twitter hashtags as a means of discussion and interaction, not just dissemination of information. Twitter is recognized by medical conferences as an important means of disseminating information and is being used by conference attendees to engage in discussions; thus, monitoring Twitter activity may provide insights into the impact of medical conference attendees.

**INTRODUCTION**

Twitter is a microblogging social networking service with approximately 175 million registered users. It is available in 39 different languages and can be accessed in real time via compatible devices (e.g., computers, smart phones, tablets). Twitter is recognized by medical conferences as an important means of disseminating information and is being used by conference attendees to engage in discussions; thus, monitoring Twitter activity may provide insights into the impact of medical conference attendees.

**OBJECTIVES**

- To evaluate the use of conference-related Twitter hashtags at general medicine conferences, thereby providing a benchmark of Twitter hashtag usage at general medicine conferences.

**METHODS**

- Conference Authority (MedThink, Raleigh, NC) was used to identify the top global medical conferences by attendance in 2011 for five therapeutic categories (general medicine, oncology, gastroenterology/hepatology, cardiology/vascular diseases, and infectious diseases). Conference Authority data are based on Society for Academic Medicine Conference (SAMC) data and attendees to conference proceedings. Conference Authority was used to identify the top five conferences in each therapeutic category. Hashtags were identified by conference attendees during the conference. Radian6 (Salesforce.com, San Francisco, CA) was used to record the number of conference-related hashtags used by conference attendees.

**RESULTS**

- Of the top five medical conferences in each therapeutic category, Oncology/Hematology conferences had the highest total hashtag reach (mean 37,105, SD 8,540), followed by Cardiology/vascular diseases (mean 3,480, SD 653), General Medicine (mean 3,194, SD 291), Infectious Diseases (mean 2,209, SD 718), and Gastroenterology/Hepatology (mean 1,035, SD 397). (A) The majority of hashtag activity was active in two therapeutic areas: Oncology/Hematology conferences (n=5) and Cardiology/vascular diseases (n=6). Oncology/Hematology conferences had a greater percentage of total hashtag activity (73%) than other specialties. In contrast, Cardiology/vascular diseases had 48% of its total activity associated with the #ddw11 hashtag used by conference attendees.

**CONCLUSIONS**

- Hashtag activity at medical conferences varies by specialty. Oncology/Hematology conferences had the greatest number of hashtag-related activities per conference attendees. Social media data have become an accepted tool for measuring the effectiveness of communication at medical conferences. Conference attendees are using Twitter hashtags as a means of discussion and interaction, not just dissemination of information. Twitter is recognized by medical conferences as an important means of disseminating information and is being used by conference attendees to engage in discussions; thus, monitoring Twitter activity may provide insights into the impact of medical conference attendees.

**IMPLICATIONS FOR PUBLICATION PROFESSIONALS**

- Twitter is recognized by medical conferences as an important means of disseminating information and is being used by conference attendees to engage in discussions; thus, monitoring Twitter activity may provide insights into the impact of medical conference attendees, helping to understand how communications effectiveness is being measured and understood.”