

Cytopathology in Focus: Cytology social media—Facebook and Twitter as networking tools

Kaitlin Sundling, MD, PhD
Amy C. Baruch, MD

August 2018—If you are not already using social media professionally, you may not know there is a vibrant and active community of pathologists, including many cytopathologists, on Facebook and Twitter—and getting involved is easy, fun, and educational.

Facebook and Twitter lend themselves well to sharing images, videos, and links to websites. Many pathologists share interesting, challenging, and educational cases via images and a concise clinical description, to which viewers can respond with their guess at the diagnoses. These cases are usually brief, providing great educational exercises that can be completed in minutes. Professional organizations, including the CAP, use Facebook and Twitter to share updates to guidelines and other information, including direct links to the authoritative source of the information. Connecting on social media can be an easy way to network within pathology and with other medical specialties, which can yield lasting professional relationships and spark collaborative work. Professional conferences generate a flurry of activity on social media; these posts can help you follow scientific updates and conference activities, even if you are unable to attend the event.¹ Some pathologists have used social media to connect with patient support groups, which can help patients better understand their diagnoses and appreciate the pathologist's role on the medical team.²

Getting involved in pathology's social media community does have a few potential pitfalls. Sharing clinical cases may lead to concerns about patient privacy. Although posting an interesting case on social media is similar to publishing a case report, social media posts are not subject to prepublication peer review, making it even more important to minimize the amount of shared, potentially identifying information. Published guidelines for sharing pathology images and deidentifying patient information are readily available. Name and age are obvious identifiers; detailed geographic location and images such as unique tattoos are examples of less obvious identifiers.³ Social media posts are public and can be permanently archived, making it important to use appropriate judgment and professionalism when disagreements arise.

The potential overlap between your personal and professional social media use is also important to consider, especially regarding controversial issues such as politics and religion. Adjusting privacy settings (e.g. for Facebook) and maintaining separate personal and professional accounts are possible solutions.

What is the best way to get involved? It is easy to create a social media account such as a Facebook page. Instructions for setting up a professional Twitter account are found in the article by Madrigal, et al.⁴ The application TweetDeck is a convenient way to organize your Twitter feed into lists of users you follow (grouped by area of interest, for example) and to follow tweets containing hashtags of interest, such as #cytopath, #meded (medical education), and #CAP18 (for this year's CAP annual meeting). While you get your feet wet, it is easy to follow individuals and organizations that interest you. The CAP, for example, is on Facebook (www.facebook.com/capathologists) and has a Twitter account, @Pathologists (www.twitter.com/pathologists). There is no pressure to participate—"lurking" is acceptable. You are invited to follow the authors on Twitter, @KaitlinSundling and @AmyBaruch1. Before long, you might find yourself tweeting, retweeting, and sharing educational cases just like the social media pros.

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3. Crane GM, Gardner JM. Pathology image-sharing on social media: recommendations for protecting privacy while motivating education. *AMA J Ethics.* 2016;18(8):817–825.
4. Madrigal E, Jiang XS, Roy-Chowdhuri S. The professional Twitter account: creation, proper maintenance, and continuous successful operation. *Diagn Cytopathol.* 2017;45(7):621–628.

Dr. Sundling is a clinical instructor at Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene and the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health, Madison. Dr. Baruch is a partner in Carolinas Pathology Group, Spartanburg, SC. Drs. Sundling and Baruch are members of the CAP Cytopathology Committee.