

EDITORIAL

Social Media Editor: what is it all about?

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“Social media editor—what does that mean?” In the last months, since I have assumed this new function in the Editorial Board of *Transplant International*, I often had to answer this question. It is not an easy question: Social media are a reality in our private and professional lives, but their role in medicine and science is still evolving and therefore open to different interpretations. In the last years, scientists realized that social media can be very useful for networking and for fostering scientific collaborations [1]. Moreover, platforms such as Twitter and Facebook offer the exceptional opportunity to reach people potentially interested in scientific news and discoveries, but not touched by the traditional way of communicating science. Using social media, scientists can directly bring their messages from the laboratory to the general public (or even to policymakers), and therefore directly influence the way science is presented and perceived [2]. The possible implications of the use of social media in medicine are even more variegated and complex. Focusing on the field of transplantation medicine, we should remember the recent ethical debates following the use of social media to find kidney or stem cell donors or as a consequence of the decision of Facebook to include “organ donor” as part of the user profile [3]. The definition of rules to exploit the enormous potential of the social networks without destabilizing the ethical principles of the whole system is a difficult issue to be addressed by the medical and scientific community in the next years.

What is the role of scientific journals in this rapidly evolving virtual world? It is a matter of fact that scientists are increasingly using social media not only as active players to promote their work, but especially as a source of information, with 37% of scientists visiting Twitter daily, according to a recent survey of *Nature* [4]. Finding the information of interest on different platforms and among the huge amount of data published every day (500 million tweets are posted on Twitter every day) is a challenging task. Scientific journals, with their expertise in the evaluation, selection, and promotion of science, might



represent a unique resource in this regard. The evaluation of the scientific quality of an article continues to be the core business of an Editorial Board, but additional functions might become more and more relevant in the future. Selecting papers of interest and bringing them to a defined audience using the appropriate channel is the key of success and might substantially contribute to the impact of a scientific discovery. Indeed, some studies found a correlation between the number of tweets and the number of citations related to a specific article [5]. Moreover, new metrics tools focused on social media (such as *Altmetric*) might reflect the impact of an article in a way complementary to the classical parameters and might assume an increasing relevance particularly in consideration of the rising skepticism related to the peer-review system [6].

With the introduction of a Social Media Editor, *Transplant international* clearly demonstrates its interest to become an active player in this new way of communicating science. Our social media activity should not only spread the content of the journal through social media networks and stimulate discussion on the topic published in the journal, but also establish a platform for reliable information in the field of transplantation (Fig. 1). Our Twitter account (@Transpl_Int) represents the direct link between the journal and the transplant community and is becoming more and more popular (Fig. 2). Furthermore, we closely collaborate with ESOT

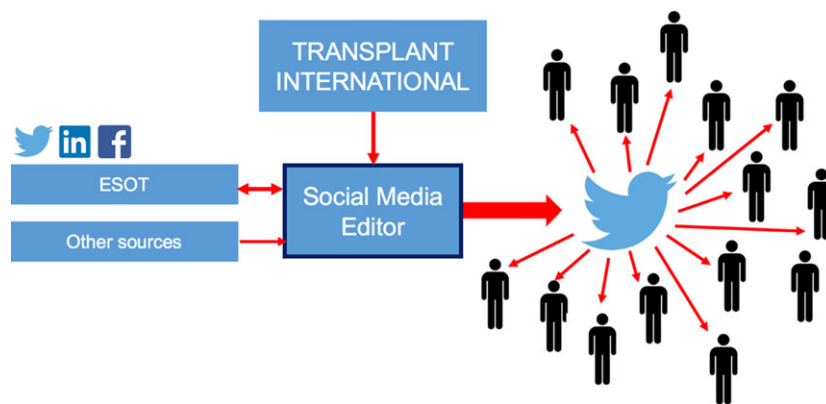


Figure 1 The Social Media Editor as a link between *Transplant International* and the transplant community.

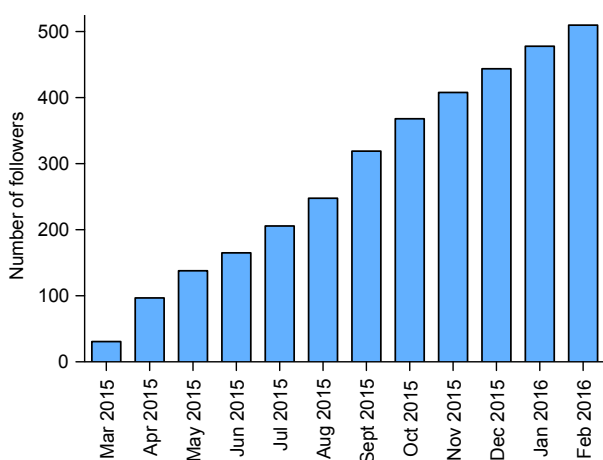


Figure 2 The number of followers of @Transpl_Int on Twitter in the first months of activity.

to consolidate the interaction between the society and its official journal. As a Social Media Editor, I have the pleasure to coordinate the social media activity of

Transplant international and to directly contribute to the selection of the most appropriate articles to be promoted online. All articles are systematically considered and evaluated depending on their topic, their scientific quality, and their presentation. This last point is of particular relevance: I strongly encourage all the authors submitting their work to *Transplant international* to take into account that papers with a clear message, a self-explaining title, and informative figures are more likely to be successful on the social media. Consider all these aspects, directly contact me if you have any specific question (@Transpl_Int) and I will be glad to promote your work and to try to contribute to the success of your research in the web 2.0 era.

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