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## Social Physio

What social media possibilities can be offered to us as physiotherapists? **Jasmin Clegg**

### AT ONE GLANCE

Facebook facilitates and stimulates evidence-based physiotherapy – this might still seem surreal for many of us. Let our German/South African author Jasmin Clegg convince you that out there you can find informative and exciting networks for physiotherapists in the social media world.

#### Social media – a whole new world

Do you remember roaming through the library where shelves are full of old, dust covered books? The air filled with a hunger for the lingering knowledge, as the

shadow of mystery follows you around every corner – just like entering another world of excitement and inspiration. Today the world wide web fascinates us in a similar way. You find yourself in a room of opportunities where every window offers a different outlook that leads to an endless stream of information, privately and professionally. Even for a physiotherapist there are many possibilities to obtain and to share information.

The very first email was sent in the 1970s. At the same time the first internet-forum was created. However it wasn't until the millennium that the world wide web had its breakthrough into our life. In 2004 Facebook opened the means of communication for all people around the world which now forms an integral part of our everyday life. Initially Facebook was formed as a social network for the students of Harvard University which the founder, Mark Zuckerberg, attended. In time it has developed into a worldwide communication network where today we can

find friends and share our life through events, photos and chats with others. Through the years technical development has allowed us to form more social groups other than Facebook which not only can be accessed with a computer but also with tablets and smartphones.

#### Social networks and physiotherapy?

So now you might find yourself wondering what social networking has to do with physiotherapy. Social networking like Facebook is often associated with negativity however let me take the chance to point out some advantages.

Being part of a network can particularly broaden your knowledge. In blogs and groups you find a lot of articles with different topics. The articles are written to be easily understood and encourage discussions among professionals. Personally I find it very helpful that a network saves my interests and in turn >>>



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The wonderful world of social media. Useful for physiotherapists?

suggests blogs/groups/pages that might interest me. Being part of these groups allows for the interaction among healthcare professionals which is commonly criticized for the lack thereof. The network offers the ideal possibility to learn from and about each other and encourages one to improve one's own clinical reasoning. In shared videos, entire treatment strategies are visualised that on the one hand give an impression of a specialised area of profession. And on the other hand, they encourage and assist you with trying it yourself or trigger the long forgotten.

In groups that deal with subjects concerning healthcare in general we can learn about the needs of our patients, as these groups are usually visited by them. A physiotherapist has the direct possibility to portray himself and his services to the rest of the world as the patients and clients are already present! Physios and other disciplines can deliver top quality information regarding any medical condition and therapeutic possibilities.

Another benefit of social networking is the quick access to job offers and advertising. Don't forget that besides word of mouth the quickest way to your therapist is through the internet. And because of social media activities companies are found much easier through search engines.

To conclude, I can say that social networks don't just offer us the possibilities to receive information but also allows for us to communicate and advertise our own services.

### User resistance and prejudices

Interestingly, it occurs that many of us refuse to be a part of this technological development. One of the reasons for this is often the lack of data security, internet mobbing and digitalisation of communi-



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Not just developing knowledge but a fun way to get connected with other physiotherapists

cation. Could there be more to this other than the usual points of criticism? For example, people's ignorance and unfamiliarity? Do social media keep us from the little chit-chat with our colleagues in the kitchen? Will formal educational courses be unnecessary in the future and will we never need to look at our books again? I'll leave you to think about it ...

### Scientific material vs. network for the unfamiliar – Social Media and me

During my research I realised that Germans don't like to integrate social media into their everyday life. While the rest of the world moves ahead we avoid technological development.

So, being a German, I have looked at myself critically. I am a Facebook member and to be honest, most of the other networks are rather unfamiliar to me. "Anatomy & Physiotherapy" was my only Facebook group for a long time.

When I started researching social media, I was surprised to find such a

large variety of useful information sources. I focused on looking for physiotherapy groups and found many that intrigued me. Nowadays I visit those groups on a regular basis and educate myself through the articles and videos that are being published. Admittedly the search using specific keywords is still difficult but as most articles and videos are categorised by practical examples, it is often possible to find what you are looking for. They are easily accessible and I find myself spoilt for choice with all the scientific material.

The only "disadvantage" would be that most of the articles are written in English. This makes perfect sense as English is a universal language but I can also imagine that this could be a barrier for many German physiotherapists.

### Anatomy & Physiotherapy – The Facebook Group

I was curious to find out how the "Anatomy & Physiotherapy" y Facebook group was formed and what it is all about.

Marc Schmitz, physiotherapist (MSc), founder of “Anatomy & Physiotherapy” and an anatomy lecturer at a physiotherapy department in the Netherlands, knows how important a basic knowledge of Evidence based Practice is for a future physiotherapist. “But a lot of students don’t like searching literature and reading difficult articles,” he says. “So I thought, how can I bring Evidence based Practice to my students in a fun way for them to learn? Social media, to me, was the answer”.

“Anatomy & Physiotherapy” turned out to be a very successful informative group and a communication source which nowadays is used by doctors, researchers, universities and physiotherapy associations worldwide. Today they reach over 50.000 unique people a week via Twitter and YouTube, Google or LinkedIn.

Every day two summaries of quality research are posted by an international team of specialised physiotherapists. “It’s voluntary work but it is the enthusiasm about our profession and the mission and ambition that motivate us,” says Marc Schmitz. ““Anatomy & Physiotherapy’ tries to be the filter for the professional. Evidence based Practice is absolutely necessary for delivering transparency in how we treat and diagnose, to facilitate lifelong learning, to limit the explosive rising of health care costs, to gain more effectiveness of

treating patients and to increase patient satisfaction.”

And when I asked him if he thinks that in the future “Anatomy & Physiotherapy” can replace the attendance of formal educational courses, he responded: “No. As physiotherapists we need to be educated ‘in real life’ and need the hands-on training. But social media like “Anatomy & Physiotherapy” can certainly help in educating us and indirectly making patients satisfied about the experience with their physiotherapist.”

### My personal conclusion

The earlier we find our way into the virtual world wide web the better. The internet offers many possibilities for us physiotherapists that we need to embrace if we would like to be up to date and move forward in our profession. Lifelong learning has been simplified by easy tools of communication networks and a wide range of information sources.

After all, social networking can never replace the dialogue between colleagues and the participation in formal educational courses. Think about it this way: Physiotherapy can be divided into two parts: physis – nature, therapeia – act of caring. It describes a service to the human body and soul, in the real world and not the virtual world! ■



### INTERNET

Curious?

<http://www.facebook.com/anatomyphysiotherapy>

[@evbasedphysio](http://www.twitter.com/evbasedphysio)

<http://www.youtube.com/anatomyphysiotherapy>

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<http://www.facebook.com/physiotherapeuten.de>



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