

CONFERENCE

## Session Report

# Social Media Continuing Medical Education: Next Steps

### Speakers

**Cindy van Dijk**

*Principal, Scientific Communications*

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*President and Founder, Bonum Continuing Education*

### By Laura Tibaquirá, MA, ELS

Continuing medical education (CME) refers to educational activities designed to help physicians maintain, develop, or increase their knowledge and skills. CME credits are required by different medical specialties to ensure professionals are up-to-date with the latest advancements and practices.

Cindy van Dijk and Allison Kickel's presentation at the AMWA's 2023 Medical Writing & Communication Conference provided an overview of how medical communicators can use social media (SoMe) to take CME to the next level.

### SoMe AND CME

"Name one useful thing you have learned from social media." With this statement, the presenters invited attendees to share their experiences with SoMe and how it is used to gather and share knowledge. They reflected on how health care professionals (HCPs) can now harness the potential of SoMe and actively use it for training, timely CME, and ongoing professional development.

### BENEFITS

In the busy world of clinical medicine, there are distinct advantages to using the SoMe CME to engage physicians.

- **Available on demand:** Physicians can arrange their ongoing educational opportunities around their schedule.
- **No discussion restrictions:** HCPs can engage in open and unrestricted discussions, allowing a free exchange of ideas and enabling participants to ask questions, challenge concepts, and share their perspectives.
- **Content validation:** SoMe CME adheres to all the same guidelines as regular CME and includes academic and practicing clinicians in the development and delivery of the programs. Established mechanisms maintain the credibility and reliability of the information presented.

- **Adherence to regulations:** The Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education sets CME standards to ensure content delivered through SoMe is compliant with recognized academic and professional standards.
- **Peer-to-peer and networking opportunities:** HCPs can connect and network with their peers from different specialties, institutions, and geographical locations.
- **Spaced learning and measurement over time:** Learning activities can be posted over time, allowing for better retention and reinforcement of knowledge.
- **Cost-effectiveness:** Professionals can access educational content, engage in discussions, and expand their knowledge without high expenses or registration fees.

### TYPES

There are many types of educational formats and platforms and, as Cindy and Allison explained, their use depends on the communicator's objective, the audience, and the type of content. Here are the most popular types:

- **Webinars:** Live or taped-to-live online educational presentations. Commonly used platforms: YouTube, Facebook Live, Instagram, and X/Twitter
- **Online communities and discussion forums:** Specific spaces to share opinions, interact, and connect. Commonly used platforms: Facebook, SERMO, and Doximity
- **Blogs and vlogs:** Articles and personal commentaries on a specific topic. It is a vlog if it contains video material. Commonly used platforms: WordPress, Blogger, LinkedIn Pulse, and YouTube
- **Journal clubs:** Groups that meet regularly to evaluate academic literature. Commonly used platforms: X/Twitter, Facebook groups, and Slack
- **Tweetorials:** Threaded tweets with a concise overview of a topic, including pretest and posttest questions. Commonly used platforms: X/Twitter

### KEYS TO SUCCESS AND RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

Each SoMe platform has distinct capabilities and unique benefits and downsides, so developing hosted SoMe CME can be a bit overwhelming. Some of the keys to success are to think differently and be open to change, know the target

audience, focus on the educational value of the content, and understand the dynamic nature of SoMe. Most important of all is to stay active and expect the unexpected.

Sharing medical education on SoMe should consider a number of factors depending on the platform and audience. Here are a few planning-to-execution tips:

- Consider the dynamics and limitations of the platform (character limits and the use of emojis, images, hashtags, and polling questions).
- Gather supporting references.
- Validate content with other professionals.
- Test the content before posting it.

### FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

SoMe CME media is constantly evolving; it offers unique opportunities for HCPs to enhance learning, connect, and collaborate, but it also poses challenges and requires more

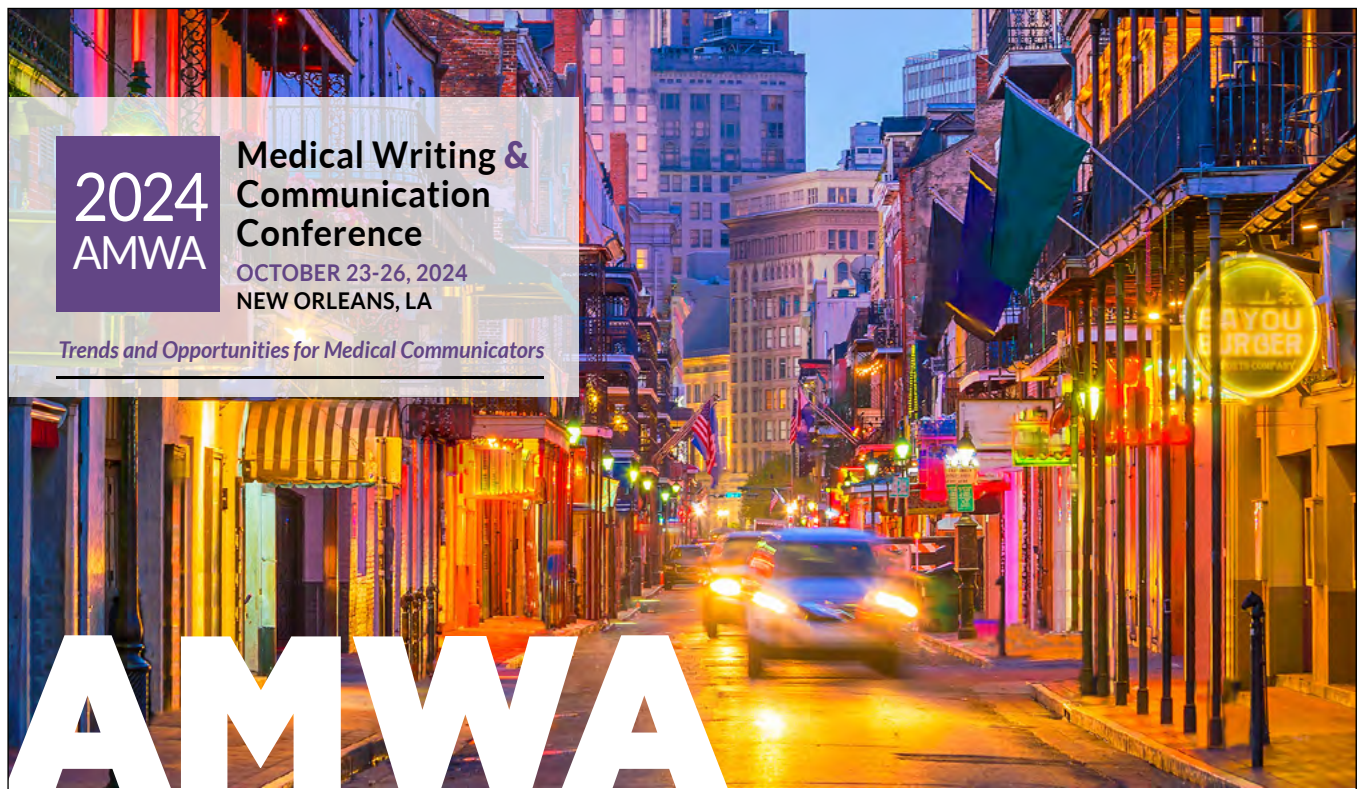
robust risk management strategies than traditional CME. HCPs need to critically evaluate content to ensure accuracy, protect patient information, adhere to ethical guidelines, and be mindful of potential biases.

Cindy and Allison reminded us that as HCPs and communicators, we can embrace SoMe CME as a valuable addition to our continuous learning journey, working together to shape the future of medical education and, ultimately, improve patient outcomes.

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