

Hospitals explore social media

Emma Connors

Hospitals have a lot to gain from social media, but it's a steep learning curve.

Once upon a time people who were happy with their care wrote a thank you card to a hospital or a letter to their newspaper.

Now they put it on Facebook. "I would like to thank the theatre staff of 21/2/12," posted one former patient of Geelong Hospital on the Facebook wall of Victoria's regional health service Barwon Health.

"Sorry for throwing you a curve ball during my procedure," the patient went on. "And a huge thanks to the wonderful staff of HW4 for their care and help during my stay there. All are a great credit to Barwon Health."

Barwon Health is careful about privacy. If the marketing team in charge of its Facebook and Twitter operations thinks a patient has provided too many personal details, they will take the comment down. If a patient has a complaint, he or she will be contacted and encouraged to pursue the matter offline.

But the goal was to provide two-way communication, and that meant as few comments as possible were taken down, said Kate Nelson, Barwon Health's communications and social engagement director.

"We don't want to delete comments from Facebook — that flies in the face of being open and transparent," she said.

"We have nurses posting things on the wall about the [industrial]



Tech pulse ... Barwon Health has 1700 Facebook friends.

Photo: ISTOCKPHOTO

dispute, for example, and we are not touching them.

"We are careful not to promote any particular product but, as far as a thank you to the hospital goes, we think those comments are much the same as letters to local papers and they should stay."

Social media could be of great benefit to the health sector but there were risks to be managed, said

Jacinda de Witts, health law commentator and partner at Minter Ellison.

"One key risk is exposure to false testimonials on social media sites," she said.

The Federal Court ruled last year that a health service provider could be held responsible for false representations by patients about an organisation's products and services

posted on the provider's Facebook wall.

The court found testimonials on Allergy Pathways' Facebook wall breached undertakings given following an earlier investigation by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission on false representations and misleading and deceptive conduct.

That decision was significant, said Ms de Witts. Allergy Pathways was held to be responsible because it knew the testimonials had been posted and chose not to remove them.

Barwon Health's social media activity is pretty advanced by Australian standards. But the need to keep track of who is saying what acts as a brake on the organisation's more ambitious plans.

Ms Nelson said it would like eventually to follow the example of US pioneers such as the Mayo Clinic and establish online communities for patients.

"That is of interest to us but we need to do considerable work around the privacy implications and how such a community would be managed," she said. "We are on a very steep learning curve. It's very time consuming, and there is a lot of surveillance work required."

Barwon Health has 850 followers on Twitter and 1700 friends on Facebook. These are a mix of local residents, staff, Geelong businesses and others. The organisation will this week launch a CEO blog, to be promoted on Facebook. The support of senior management had been crucial, Ms Nelson said.

THE TECHNOLOGY OF Search

Last week Google implemented its all-new but not all-popular privacy policy, which sought to tie together as much data about individual users as it can possibly grab. Predictably, privacy activists lament the development. Google's director of privacy for products and engineering, Alma Whitten, took to *The Guardian's* website in the UK with a guest blog in order to try and explain the moves without mentioning "increased ad revenue".



She says it is all for users' benefit. It will save users' time in not having to read multiple policies over different products and create a better user experience by tailoring various Google products to individual settings. And if users don't like it they should just use sites like YouTube and maps without signing in.

Space

After US President Barack Obama proposed a flat budget for NASA in 2013, *Livescience.com* said a group of professional astronomers was urging the White House and Congress to find a better balance between the space agency's planetary science and exploration needs.

The American Astronomical Society (AAS) is asking Obama and Congress to include a greater variety of small, medium and large space missions across the fields of astronomy,



astrophysics, planetary science and solar physics.

Meanwhile the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence Institute has launched a website (www.setilive.org) to encourage the public to contribute computing power to help analyse data from SETI's radio telescope.

Defence

US military technology website defensetech.org reports that Pentagon officials are continuing investigations into protecting US facilities against the threat of attack by electromagnetic pulse, or EMP. Anyone who has watched terrorism-related movies will know that EMPs accompany nuclear blasts and knock out electronic signals and devices in the surrounding area. Assistant secretary of defence for research and engineering Zachary Lemnios has reportedly admitted that no facilities were properly prepared for attacks and there was no way to say when defences would be developed.

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Tablets used to boost egos, says survey

David Ramli

One in 10 legal and accounting professionals buys tablet devices like Apple's iPad as status symbols, Thomson Reuters research found.

The *Mobile Device Usage* survey asked 324 senior staff and partners in mid to large law and accounting firms about their use and opinion of tablet devices.

When asked for the main reasons why they used tablets in the work place, 62 per cent said working on the move was a top priority while half said it was for internet browsing.

But 11 per cent told researchers they used tablet computers as a status symbol to show off while at work.

The survey also showed a link

between office rank and tablet use, with partners or senior managers making up 61 per cent of owners. By comparison, less than 10 per cent of users were graduates or junior staff.

Thomson Reuters chief technology officer Rick Ness said he was surprised lawyers and accountants still saw tablets as a way to raise their social profiles. The iPad was still the most recognisable status booster.

"If you're walking around with the only iPad I can see why some people see it as a status symbol," he said. "But I think you can see two-thirds of people with a mobile device has an iPad so it isn't much of one any more."

"There will always be the latest, greatest thing you pull out of your briefcase to make people go wide-

eyed and I think if we do the survey in six months the [perception will change]."

Separate research by the University of Sydney also found executives were "getting heavier", with more professionals buying more than one device to split work and home lives.

According to a five-year study by senior lecturer Kristine Dery and Judith McCormick, all surveyed executives had bought two smartphones and were struggling with being available at all times.

Although staff at one surveyed organisation were offered training to improve time management, "sessions were typically poorly attended... as busy executives always found something better to do with their time."

APP REVIEW

Work



ThumbSlide

Developer: QuickNote

Devices: iPhone, iPad (iOS 4.0 or later)

Cost: \$0.99 (App Store)

As if regular predictive text doesn't give me enough of a headache, a few geekovators are now trying to tell me I can type even faster [but still accurately] without taking my finger off touch-screen "keys". "It will save you time," they say.

Well ok, but are those precious few seconds worth the inevitable cockpits cocos cock-ups?

While touch-screen keys become a bit of a pain to tap over and over if you're writing something long or taking notes, during a conference say, this isn't the answer for fast tablet writing. For this to work you need to forget all you know about touch typing or even using multiple fingers to type. It's a strictly one finger exercise — how is that faster?

Even if you can instinctively find the keys as your finger zooms across the screen, you waste so much time editing your weird typos its not actually any faster in the long run.

App store rating: unrated AFR rating: 1/5

Play



Game Dev Story

Developer: Kairossoft

Devices: iPhone, iPod touch, iPad (iOS 3.1 or later); Android (1.6 and higher)

Cost: \$4.49 (App Store); \$2.50 (Android Market)

Six months ago I went into labour at 2am without having managed a wink of sleep. I wasn't awake because I couldn't get comfortable. I was playing Game Dev Story. My husband also hadn't slept. He was next to me — playing Game Dev Story. Since having my baby I've removed this game from my phone because, frankly, I have to concentrate on raising a human being. This is one of the most addictive games I have ever played. The premise seems almost stupidly simple: you own a game development start-up, you hire developers, you build games for different platforms. It is a game centred around allocating resources. Resource allocation for Christ's sake. And the graphics are retro 8-bit pixel style a la 1989, as are all Kairossoft games. But for some reason you just can't put it down. Buy it now — but only if you have nothing to do for the rest of your life.

App store rating: 5/5 AFR rating: 5/5

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