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Social media can be used to improve health in rural and remote Australia

Name:

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Introduction

One of the main aims of this paper is to highlight the main roles that can be played by social media in the improvement of health standards and heath statuses in the rural areas of Australia. There is no doubt about the fact that the social media has taken over the internet and more users are found using social media on the internet as compared to any other website. There are many ways in which the social media (Grier, & Bryant, 2005, p. 320). Social media is a set o certain websites and applications that enable the users to create content and share it with the other people using that particular social media. These days it has been seen that great changes have been imparted in the society by the social media. Based on this fact, it can be added here that social media can play stronger and more influential roles in brining better health based changes in the remote and rural areas of Australia (Naughton, Prevost, Gilbert, & Sutton, 2012).

Use of social networking by healthcare practitioners

Based on its increased popularity, these days social networking is being used by the health care professionals in an increased manner. Out of various social networking tools that are being used by the professionals, one of the main tools is Facebook, which has been used by many agencies and parties for marketing and promotion (Whittaker, Dorey, Bramley, Bullen, Denny, Elley, & Salmon, 2011). Facebook has been used for the creation of a page named as Rural Health Workforce, (https://www.facebook.com/RuralHealthWorkforce. This page provides increased opportunity for joining in discussions regarding the health issues in rural and remote areas of Australia. One of the other main tools that have been used by the health professionals includes LinkedIn. This page is mostly used for professional networking. A group has been made on those page named as The National Rural Health Association, http://www.linkedin.com/company/national-rural-health-association. One of the main aims of

this page is to promote discussions and professional networking among the health professionals who seek to provide better health opportunities in the remote and rural areas of Australia (Suarez-Almazor, 2011, p. 462).

The third main tool that has been used by the professionals includes Wiki. This page is a series of documents that can be shared, uploaded and edited by the healthcare professionals for sharing information. One of the main pages in these cases is Nyaya Health Wiki, http://wiki.nyayahealth.org/w/page/4682674/FrontPage that aims to make sure that the collaboration and interaction of the healthcare professionals can be improved and increased working in the remote locations (Whittaker, Borland, Bullen, Lin, McRobbie, & Rodgers, 2009). One of the main advantages of Wiki is that it provides increased quality control. This is made possible with the help of the freedom which is provide to the users by making sure that they can edit, change any information which seems older, false or outdated (Free, Phillips, Galli, Watson, Felix, Edwards, & Haines, 2013). Thereby from here, it can be seen that more advantages can be gained with the help of Wiki as it can greatly benefit the p professionals who are working in the rural and remote locations. Wiki can be one of the main sources with the help of which the issue of isolation and barriers can be discussed in a better manner (Yeager, & Menachemi, 2011, p. 240).

Another main tool includes blogs and micro blogs. Blogs can be defined as the content management tools in which the information and data is shown in the reverse chronological order (Lee, 2001). One of the main blogs, The Rural Health – A Life Changing Difference, http://ruralchampions.govspace.gov.au/ is the collection of the archives of information that has been uploaded by the health care professionals who are working in the rural areas of Australia. In contrast micro blogging is the collection of rather briefer entries. One of the main micro blog in these cases is Twitter. The twitter micro blog named as The Rural Mental Health, https://twitter.com/RuralMH is used to update and inform about all

rural health resources in Australia. It has also bee used to share conference updates, which has been considered important for those healthcare professionals who are isolated geographically (Haug, Meyer, Schorr, Bauer, & John, 2009).

Account of social media and its role in 12th National Rural Health Conference, Australia

Much has been highlighted in the 12th National Rural Health Conference   that was held in Australia in relation to the roles that can be played by social media in improving the health standards in rural and remote areas of Australia. The main fact that was highlighted by the speaker Alison Fairleigh was that social media is all about the accounts and recordings of real people doing real things. She mentioned that in the past there was much more reliability on the political representatives and lobby groups for playing roles in having an access to the rural and remote areas and in making sure that the access to information and healthcare can be improved in these locations. There was a great need that the aims and goals of the Australian government were given a voice to make sure that the remote and rural areas can be accessed (Donovan, & Henley, 2003).

However, social media is one of the main opportunities, which has helped in giving voice to the aims of the Australian health government for improving health standards in rural and remote areas. It was agreed that social media is one of the most powerful tools. With the help of the bundles of information that has been uploaded on the social media, many people have now become rural activists aiming to bring better changes in the remote and rural areas.

One of the main examples of these rural activists as highlighted by the speaker was Michael Trant. He created an account on Twitter named as hash tag HadAGutFul. He managed to organize for more than 2000 farm workers, farmers, and industry supporters, truck drivers from the remote and rural areas of Western Australia. The main occasion to call

unpin for the support ad gathering of these farmers was to counter the bridge protests that was organized by the supporters of Ban on Live Exports taking place at Fremantle in mid November 2012. There from here it can be argued that this was a colossal effort from Michael to bring together that many people for one cause. Of tit had net been for the social media and the power that it has in the modern days, this would have been rather impossible. The voice of these many people could only be heard based on the social media. One of the main facts that need to be motioned here is that often it becomes even harder to get one's voice heard if one belongs to the minority as the voices of the majority often becomes louder. Thereby in these cases the roils of social media need to be appreciated.

Thereby, one of the main facts that can be mentioned here is that not only the younger ones are using social media but as the powers and the advantages of the social media have now been understood, it is now being used by the elderlies for getting their voice heard as well. There are so May examples out there that have shown that with the help of the social media, voices have been given to the people of rural and remote areas of Australia (Fairleigh, 2013).

How can social media be used for health promotion in remote and rural areas of Australia

It has been seen that great focus has been given by the Australian government on the provision of better heath opportunities in the rural and remote areas of Australia. The research has indicated that currently there are five main projects that are based on social media health components. These projects have covered certain health-based areas that include smoking cessation and sexual health. Some of the main social media tools that have been used by these projects include YouTube and Facebook (Brendryen, & Kraft, 2008, p. 478).

On the other hand mobile phone apps have been developed under the funding of Australian health promotion. These are the apps that aim towards better health of the populations of the rural and remote areas of Australia. The table below shows some of the main apps that have been produced (Lim, Hocking, Aitken, Fairley, Jordan, Lewis, & Hellard, 2012, p. 71).

In these cases one of the main question that arises is that what strategies can be adopted in order to make sure that social media as well as mobile-based technologies can be used and spread for the maximum health based benefits in the remote and rural areas of Australia. In these cases it needs to be mentioned here that the adoption of social media is a chaotic process. The adoption of the social media is also dependent on the culture, demographics and location of the population (Vodopivec-Jamsek, de Jongh, Gurol-Urganci, Atun, & Car, 2012). On the other hand the usage of social media is also depending on the social connections the population has. Thereby one of the main challenges for the Australian government is to make sure there is more availability of the internet and broadband for the rural and remote populations of Australia. Once this main barrier is fulfilled, there are chances that the social media would be used by the remote and rural populations to become connected with the outside world. Thereby there are certain challenges that still need to be met by the Australian government in order to make sure that the health based challenges can be faced (Moreno, VanderStoep, Parks, Zimmerman, Kurth, & Christakis, 2009, p. 37).

The social media has been and can be used by the Department of Health of Australia for the spread of information that is more helpful for the remote and rural areas of Australia. Some of the main information that can be disseminated with the help of social media includes the departments and the related information about the projects on which these departments are working upon, the ways and the sources with the help of which the rural and remote populations of Australia can access the health departments, and the ways with the help of he

remoter and rural populations of Australia can share their concerns and raise their voice for the health based issues in the community. one of the main facts that need to be mentioned here in these cases is that much has been done by the Australian Department of health but there is a need that the aims and goals of the department as well as the government are shared with the rural and remote populations in order to make sure the social media can be used in a better manner for better communications with the remote and rural populations in Australia.

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