Reviewer’s report

Title: Social media use by community-based organizations conducting health outreach: A content analysis

Version: 1 Date: 30 June 2013

Reviewer: Judy Gold

Reviewer’s report:

This is a very well written article about an important channel for health outreach, social networking sites. The introduction is excellent and provides a good overview of the topic and the current literature. The methods section is adequately detailed, and presents a useful model for how future evaluations of the use of social media could be conducted. The results and discussion section are clear, the discussion providing useful insights into if and how CBOs may wish to use social media platforms to promote their work and organisation. Overall, an excellent contribution to the literature on the use of social media within the health sector.

Major Compulsory Revisions

None

Minor Essential Revisions

1. There appears to be a citation error in the introduction, paragraph four: the CDC guidelines for organisations to use social media are reference number 17, but the in-text citation given is number 16

2. This paper focuses on CBOs conducting “health outreach” yet health outreach is never defined. This should be stated in the methods i.e. what does health outreach consist of (as outreach in particular has different meanings within different health sectors)

3. Methods, codebook: I believe that each unit of information could have been coded under more than one category (it took me some time to realise this) – this should be explicitly stated for clarity

4. Results, paragraph two: It is unclear if the one-third refers to the total universe of organisations surveyed or to those with a Facebook account. This should be made clearer e.g. by including numerator and denominator for this figure

5. Table Two: it is unclear whether the numbers in the tables refer to the number of posts or proportions – from the main text I understand it to be proportions. This should be made clearer to the reader (e.g. inclusion of % symbol, more descriptive caption etc)

6. The data for this study was gathered from November 2011 to January 2012. As this covers a holiday period, it would be very useful for the authors to comment on if and how they believe this timing may have effected their results,
especially given each organisation was evaluated in two day blocks (i.e. one might expect the frequency and content of posts in the 30 days prior to January 10th to be different to what would have been obtained had the same organisation been evaluated for the 30 days prior to November 10th)

Discretionary Revisions

1. The authors may wish to briefly explain the different type of Facebook pages, and thus why some organisations had “likes” and others “friends”. This is important for readers less familiar with Facebook, particularly as “like” has two meanings in this paper (one, number of people following the page, the other, an ‘interaction’ with an individual post). The two meanings of likes should probably also be made clearer in the methods section.

2. As the data on engagement is very skewed, I would suggest it is more meaningful to report medians and minimum/maximum values, rather than just averages in the results section.

3. The authors may wish to cite the following review also published in BMC Public Health that addresses the use of social media within health, and finds similar findings in relation to user engagement (or lack thereof)


**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests