Reviewer’s report

Title: Role of professional networks on social media in addressing clinical questions at general practice: a cross-sectional study of general practitioners in Australia and New Zealand

Version: 0 Date: 10 Jan 2019

Reviewer: Lorainne Tudor Car

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for inviting me to peer-review this interesting paper.

This study aimed to analyse GP Facebook group posts for clinical questions and answers. This is an important topic as clinicians' clinical questions often go unanswered. Social media offers an accessible and convenient source of information from colleagues. The authors analysed a year's worth of Facebook posts in this group and found that GPs mostly asked foreground questions (>50%) related to skin condition (25%). The answers very rarely mentioned relevant research evidence.

Major comments:
It would have been more reliable to have two authors independently perform the analysis of the posts. Alternatively, randomly checking a subset of the data would increase the reliability of the findings.

A quarter of questions relate to skin conditions. It would have been helpful to learn more about the type of skin conditions these questions related to. Also, it would have been useful to know how this data compares to published literature on primary care physicians' knowledge and information needs.

The presented limitations do not seem to be relevant to this study. My suggestion would be to mention generalizability - some clinicians may not be using Facebook at all (in your study it seems that out of 5k participants, only 500 contributed to this analysis). Furthermore, the lack of inclusion of evidence-based sources does not necessarily mean that the participants did not use evidence-based information but may instead mean that they did not feel it was important to include this information in their posts. The study design is only mentioned in the title - not sure whether this should be considered a cross sectional study given the duration of the study.

Minor comments
While the study focused on clinical questions, it would have been useful to know whether other types of questions relating to patient safety, communication, administrative matters, etc. were also found. It would also be interesting to learn what the remaining >800 posts focused on.

In your conclusion you mention that your study showed large engagement of GPs in social media - this does not seem to be backed up by the data.
In relation to future increase in the use of evidence-based resources, it may be helpful to mention that moderators/admins could share EBM sources, systematic reviews, guidelines etc. relevant to the posted question.

**Are the methods appropriate and well described?**
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

**Does the work include the necessary controls?**
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

**Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?**
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Yes

**Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?**
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

Not relevant to this manuscript

**Quality of written English**
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable

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