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: 12 Jan 2019

Reviewer: Ulrik Bak Kirk

Reviewer's report:

The overall level of the paper is good, it is well written and some important considerations are highlighted. This paper has potential to be accepted, but some important points have to be clarified or fixed, before the publishing process can proceed and a positive action can be taken. To summarize the three main points:

#1 - "Social media networks" versus "single restricted Facebook group"
The authors investigate practicing family doctors' use of social media networks to overcome information overload and to address clinical questions generated from patient care. They analysed the clinical questions raised and answers provided in a closed Facebook group 'GPs Down Under' between 20 January and 10 February 2018. This means that the authors only include a single restricted Facebook group in the study, and for this reason, conclusions made about family doctors' usage of "social media networks" in plural should be made with caution.

Especially, when new studies, such as "Social Networking App Use Among Primary Health Care Professionals: Web-Based Cross-Sectional Survey" (https://mhealth.jmir.org/2018/12/e11147/), suggest that WhatsApp is generally perceived as more useful for improving professional knowledge and clinical problem solving in a primary health care setting than Twitter and Facebook. This is merely a matter of contemporary social media trends, preferences, and time typical discussions of data confidentiality etc.

#2 - "Which media types used when posting and commenting?"
Family doctors posted approximately 10 questions per day when using a closed Facebook group to get feedback on clinical questions. The majority of questions asked were about treatment and diagnosis, and more than half of all included clinical questions were about a small number of clinical topics. This corresponds with the results of a systematic review done by Del Fiol G, Workman TE, Gorman P in 2014. But were any of the comments supported by photos, which could improve the quality of the feedback given by peers? The indexing of data included in the study does not inform about the different media types posted - text, photo, video etc. - which might also influence the quality of the interactions and their impact.

#3 - "How to enhance the uptake of evidence into routine practice?"
The authors conclude that "disseminating research evidence to general practitioners using social media
networks might be useful to enhance the uptake of evidence into routine practice" (page 2, lines 19-20), however only 6% of the answers in the study referred to published relevant evidence resource. This aligns with information seeking behaviour of clinicians in the sense that "evidence-based resources are rarely used by clinicians as a primary source of information to guide their decisions" (page 7, line 4). But if the information seeking behaviour of clinicians points towards not referring to evidence-based resources - as other information guide or drive their decisions - how could use of social media networks, such as Facebook groups, change this? How would using social media in itself enhance the uptake of evidence into routine practice, if it is not only a matter of accessibility of information, but rather about other facilitating components in a complex social intervention?

**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?**
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No

**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.

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Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

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