Applying Facebook and Other Social Network Approaches into International Inter-professional Continuing Education

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This workshop will showcase how Facebook and other social network concepts and approaches can be used to promote social learning in health care teams, both for online and for combined online and face-to-face learning, in international educational activities.

The underlying problem is that frequent chronic conditions such as diabetes, ischemic heart disease, asthma or depression account for most of the burden of disease of the population both in developed and developing countries, including outpatient visits, hospitalizations, health-related quality of life, mortality and health care costs. The chronic care model provides a framework to address chronic conditions, and it requires teamwork. Inter-professional practice-based learning of health care professionals and teams is therefore necessary.

How can we address training of large numbers of professionals and teams across countries in frequent conditions, such as the ones mentioned above, in a manner that allows for reflection and practice change? One possibility is to include qualitative and quantitative information about contacts of course participants, and then use this information the same way Facebook and other social networks use it, to automatically allow for an exchange with your closest peers, rather than with a random selection of group members. This also allows to scale up the size of online courses, since the number of tutors required to foster exchange may diminish, as discussions occur among known peers.

The first challenge is how to gather the contact information from the participants in a way that both the existence and strength of the links are obtained. The second challenge is how to use this network information to create mathematical algorithms to split the course attendees into groups while maximizing the interpersonal connection among group members. The last and final challenge is how to use information produced before to improve the user experience and to generate both face-to-face and online meaningful discussions, intended to change clinical practice.

This workshop is based on a similar workshop implemented at the Alliance 2018 (Orlando, Florida, January 2018), based on the methodology published in JCEHP (1), and the results of a government-funded research project (2) based on this methodology. It will describe, by showcasing actual educational programs that used it, the process mentioned before, the professional profiles needed to implement it, the results and what else could be achieved in the future.

Participants of this session will therefore understand what they need to do, in order to apply this methodology in their own settings.

1.   Margolis A, Parboosingh J. Networked Learning and Network Science: Potential Applications to Health Professionals' Continuing Education and Development. J Contin Educ Health Prof. 2015 Summer;35(3):211-9.

 2.   Uruguayan Agency for Innovation and Research Grant AC_P_2015_1_14407: http://www.anii.org.uy/proyectos/AC_P_2015_1_14407/social-learning-analytics-aplicada-a-las-comunidades-medicas-latinoamericanas/