

# 1.P. Skills building seminar: Social Media for Public Health Actions - Maximising the use of Social Media Tools

Organised by: EUPHANxt, Young Forum Gastein, EuroNET MRPH  
Contact: info@stefanbuttigieg.com

Chairperson(s): *Christiaan Vis - The Netherlands, Damir Ivankovic - Croatia*

The Internet and Social Media provide ample opportunities for public health professionals to expand their knowledge, collaborate with colleagues and connect with the public.

This workshop aims to provide EPH participants with an overview into the possibilities of Social Media for Public Health in combination with hands-on skills training in applying and using Social Media in the everyday life of a professional. After attending this workshop, participants will be able to:

1. Understand the scope, importance and opportunities offered by Social Media for their professional life and how it can positively affect public health research, advocacy and practice
2. Make effective use of Social Networking Tools and build curated content tailored to different Social Networks and target audiences.

## Methods

This 90-minute skills-workshop consists of two highly interactive parts: 1) social media - what's in it for public health, and 2) skills-building in applying social media for public health professionals in everyday life.

Social media - what's in it for public health

The first part provides an overview of current state of the art in what Social Media can do for public health and how individuals, institutions, organizations and networks use it. This will be delivered through three brief presentations and a plenary discussion on the topics of:

- A Practical Case-Study by Dr. Angelo D'Ambrosio who will delve into practical uses of publicly-available Social Media data in predicting disease outbreaks and health behaviour patterns through the raising importance of Digital Epidemiology.
- The Power of Social Media by Stefan Buttigieg. Dr. Buttigieg will provide a technical overview of the current Social Media Landscape including what's hot and what's not, and a deeper look into the major Social Networks to lay down the basis for the practical Skills training in the second part of this workshop.
- Relevance of Social Media within mental health - Prof. Helen Christensen (to be confirmed). She is a chief scientist and director of the Black Dog Institute in Australia and will focus on the development, testing, implementation and dissemination of eHealth applications including social media, aimed at reducing or preventing anxiety, depression and suicide risk.
- The skills training will focus on:
  - Choosing the right Social Media platform for your target audience
  - Building your Social Media presence - Learn how to create an Engaging Social Media Profile/Page
  - The importance of Storytelling when building your Social Media Presence - how to share your story with the right audience

## Conclusions

The theme for the 9th EPH Conference is 'All for Health, Health for All'. Social Media and the Internet provide ample opportunities to reach those in need and strengthen population health. The skill-workshop will provide participants with

in depth knowledge on research in social media for public health, as well as practical skills for employing social media in their professional lives.

## Key messages:

- Choosing the right Social Media platform for an intended use and target audience
- Building your Social Media presence - Learn how to create an Engaging Social Media Profile (with a focus on Facebook Fan Pages and Twitter Profiles)

## The power of social media - how can public health professionals make the best use of social media

Stefan Buttigieg

*S Buttigieg*

Malta Association of Public HealthMedicine, St. Paul's Bay, Malta

EUPHANxt

Contact: info@stefanbuttigieg.com

## Challenge

Public Health Professionals are faced with a bewildering array of social network tools at their disposal, yet they might find it challenging to know where to start from. This presentation will provide them with the opportunity to have an overview of what tools are available for them and some recommended practices to get started or enhance their existing social media presence.

## Description of Challenge

Around 40% of the world population has an internet connection today and with the further dissemination of computers and mobile devices, social networks have developed and flourished. This presentation will go over the current existing social networks and provide basic recommendations on which social networks are ideal to implement public health actions. In addition, the author will also be analysing the usefulness of social media in public health and the insights that academic literature provides us in this regard. This presentation will also explore successful case studies of the use of Social Media in Public Health and provide basic take-home messages to implement in day to day situations.

## Lessons

- The main objectives of this presentation:
- Provide a basic understanding on what are the offerings of the existing social media tools.
- Delve deeper into the communication aspect of social networks and explore the different possibilities available for European Public Health Professionals
- Provide basic recommendations on how to manage such tools and how to maximise engagement.

## Digital epidemiology. Using the internet for population health. How to listen and what can we discover

Angelo D'Ambrosio

*A D'Ambrosio, A Tozzi, F Gesualdo*

Multifactorial Disease and Complex Phenotype Research Area, Bambino

Gesù Children Hospital IRCCS, Rome, Italy

Contact: angelo.dambrosio@opbg.net

## Issue

Using the digital traces people all over the world constantly leave on the Internet, Public Health officers can now get insights into population health and their population health needs with unprecedented speed and with a fraction of resources needed by usual epidemiological methods.

**Description of problem**

The Internet has grown exponentially in the last 30 years and now is a fundamental building block of our societies even in the less developed parts of the world. People use the internet every day, searching for information, producing information, commenting and sharing the information they think is valuable. These actions leaves signals that can be used to track diseases dynamics, enable real-time event-based surveillance, investigate health behaviors, understand health topics relevant or neglected by the people. Furthermore, increasing computational power, smart mobile devices, techniques like Natural Language Processing and Machine Learning give access to new sources of data and allow to extract meaning from unstructured and complex information. These

methodologies fall under the name of Digital Epidemiology; modern Public Health officers need to be aware of how such revolution can improve their everyday work and reveal new horizons.

**Results**

We aim to deliver a workshop both conceptual and practical, where the discipline of Digital Epidemiology is introduced, new developments in the field are presented and participants are involved in a hands-on simulation of an epidemiological study using the presented techniques. The goal is to provide Public Health officers new to the field a primer on the opportunities provided by the methodology and the assumption and challenges it brings.