

# Harnessing synergies in healthcare and social media



At the signing of the #HealthXPh Manifesto.

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Social media, like it or not, is influencing the way healthcare is being practiced by doctors and patients alike. Now, healthcare stakeholders are exploiting its power to raise awareness, advance advocacies, and ultimately improve outcomes in an increasingly interconnected world.

## Healthcare Social Media Summit 2015

The Healthcare Social Media Summit held last February 21, 2015 in Cebu addressed how widespread internet and social media use has reshaped the healthcare landscape and the interactions between physicians and patients.

In her inspirational speech, Dr Minerva Calimag, president of the Philippine Medical Association, said that social media has

changed how people feel about transparency and authenticity. She encouraged doctors to engage their respective communities in trust-based relationships. Noting that social media can be used for continuing education and professional development, she urged attendees to “harness synergies in social media and healthcare.”

Pat Rich, managing editor for member communications of the Canadian Medical Association, cited how more patients are turning to “Dr Google” as their primary source of medical information. While doctors aspire to practice evidence-based medicine, the ease with which patient stories become viral through social media has led to the resurgence of “anecdotal medicine.” The number of healthcare-related apps has also exploded. We’re at a point, Mr. Rich said, that physicians have to ask them-

selves if they are digitally literate enough to deal with the changing healthcare environment.

Dr Anthony Leachon, president of the Philippine College of Physicians, related how social media was instrumental in the group's efforts to lobby for the passage of the sin tax bill. Social media can be a powerful tool for advocating patients' rights, he said, stressing that "knowledge, when not shared, is useless."

Other topics addressed during the summit include medical professionalism, patient privacy and confidentiality, health promotion, and health professions education, all in the context of social media.

### **The #HealthXPh Manifesto**

The 2015 Healthcare Social Media Summit was convened by Drs Remo-tito Aguilar, Iris Thiele Isip-Tan, Ma. Gia Sison, and Narciso Tapia – the same group of doctors behind #HealthXPh. A Twitter chat held every Saturday at 9 PM, #HealthXPh discussions are centered on a pre-announced healthcare-related issue. Anyone can join the conversation by adding the hashtag #HealthXPh to tweets. According to #HealthXPh's Dr Helen Madamba, #HealthXPh generated over 300 million impressions in the first eight weeks of 2015 alone; one recent chat on the topic "Social Media: Making (or Breaking) the Doctor-Patient Relationship" generated nearly 10 mil-

lion impressions on Twitter.

In a more general sense, #HealthXPh is also a movement. According to Aguilar, #HealthXPh aims to "discuss and use emerging technologies and social media to positively impact the Philippine health landscape." Its vision includes education of healthcare stakeholders and the practice of participatory medicine. This goal in mind, one of the highlights of the Healthcare Social Media Summit was the signing of the #HealthXPh Manifesto, a declaration of intent by participants in the #HealthXPh movement. Excerpts from the manifesto:

- "I am a healthcare provider and I will conduct myself in a manner worthy of my profession, even online."
- "I will ensure that the information I post, like or share is accurate."
- "Whatever I post online in relation to my clinical expertise should be of benefit to my countrymen. I will prioritize the promotion and advancement of health rather than of medical products."
- "I will refrain from posting information online that will compromise patient confidentiality and privacy."

While the summit was a "dream come true" for the #HealthXPh organizers, they hope it is only the beginning of greater collaboration and engagement in healthcare through social media. In the words of Calimag, "Let's get connected."

