

# MAPHM Symposium 2017

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Abstract Title:

## **Adoption and Use of Social Media amongst Public Health Professionals in Malta and its potential role in successful public health initiatives**

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## Abstract

### Background

The aim of this dissertation is to investigate current social media uptake and use amongst Public Health Professionals in Malta and explore the potential of using social media to enhance the effectiveness of public health efforts. Social Media is an exponentially growing technology with a reach of more than 2 billion users. In Malta, the percentage of people participating in social networks (as a percentage of people aged 16-74 who have used the internet during the last 3 months) in 2016 was at a staggering 81%.

### Methodology

This study followed a mixed-methods methodology, with a quantitative and qualitative aspect.

An online cross-sectional survey on 52 members of the Malta Association of Public Health Medicine who fall under the category of Full Members and Specialist Trainees was performed. The questionnaire was distributed over a period of four weeks. Furthermore, respondents who accepted an invitation from the original questionnaire were approached for semi-structured interviews. The interviews were carried out, audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Data analysis was carried in a two-fold manner. The results from the online questionnaire were analysed using SPSS and R. The semi-structured interviews were analysed using NVIVO software and interviews and observations were coded inductively.

### Results

The overall response rate for the online cross-sectional survey was 53%, with 38 unique visits and 74% completion. Significance Testing is currently underway. Furthermore, 11 semi-structured interviews were conducted. The interviews included 1 Director, 7 Consultants in Public Health Medicine, 2 Specialist Trainees and 1 Resident Specialist. The initial qualitative analysis identified several aspects of education, skill competency and privacy concerns as barriers for uptake of Social Media amongst Public Health Professionals. The overarching themes of Facebook, Social Media



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Competency, Privacy and Security, Digital Literacy and Strategy were outlined. Further analysis is ongoing.

## Conclusion

The main outcome of this research is the need to put forward a set of evidence-based, forward looking recommendations for Public Health Professionals to ensure Social Media Proficiency and Digital Marketing Competency amongst themselves and within their working environments. This will ensure that the messages they would like to convey, will be disseminated in the most effective way using all the available media through a tailored Digital Marketing Strategy.