

Medical Twitter: A Novel Way to Stay Informed in Allergy/Immunology

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A “Practice Pearl” helps an allergist-immunologist practice more safely, effectively, timely, efficiently, equitably, or in a more patient-centered way. This feature is coordinated by Stuart Abramson, MD, Giselle Mosnaim, MD, and Andrew Murphy, MD, from the AAAAI Federation of Regional, State, and Local Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology Societies Assembly and by Editorial Board member Matthew Rank, MD. More information about submitting a “Practice Pearl” can be found on our website (jaci-inpractice.org).

PRACTICE CHALLENGE

The field of allergy and immunology is constantly changing. For instance, over the past few years, mAbs have transformed the way moderate to severe asthma is treated.¹ Also, this year peanut oral immunotherapy has become a therapeutic option for children and adolescents with peanut allergies.² Allergy and immunology research is published in a wide array of medical journals throughout the world. Although national allergy organizations attempt to disseminate practice changes through email messages, journal clubs, continuing medical education, and maintenance of certification, it is still hard to stay current on the latest medical literature and developments in the field. Moreover, because official guidelines and updated practice parameters may not come out for months, it can be difficult for an allergist/immunologist to determine how a research finding should change the way he or she practices medicine.

PRACTICE SOLUTION

Some of the physicians who publish important articles in allergy and immunology are present on the social media platform Twitter. On Twitter, they not only publicize their latest research findings and share articles they find interesting, especially in their areas of expertise, but also provide context on how this information may change the way they make medical decisions. For example, when peanut oral immunotherapy was approved by the Food and Drug Administration in January 2020, allergists on Twitter provided commentary on the subtleties of oral

immunotherapy in an easily-digestible format—each Tweet is a maximum 280 characters long. Other times, different allergists will chime in on a particular topic, resulting in a cacophonous yet informative virtual town hall (Table 1). This is especially true when allergists live-tweet during national and international meetings, sharing information in real time as it is presented. Indeed, following multiple allergists on Twitter gives exposure to multiple perspectives.

Thanks to these allergists on Twitter, it is easier to stay current on the latest advances in the field, and unearth important articles that otherwise would have been missed. Of course, Twitter is not a substitute for reading the articles themselves, but it can still serve as a screening tool to figure out what is important. A nugget of information on an allergist's Twitter feed can be reported to a patient the next day. A case report that is shared will suddenly be relevant for a difficult-to-treat patient. Twitter democratizes access to the thoughts and opinions of these physicians, at a speed that would've been unthinkable before the widespread use of the internet.

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TABLE I. Select list of allergists and allergy organizations active on Twitter

Name/organization	Twitter handle	Area of expertise	No. of followers (as of June 24, 2020)	Date joined Twitter
Dr Kimberly Blumenthal	@KimberlyBlumen1	Drug allergies	1,266	April 2013
Dr Ves Dimov	@DrVes	Shares important news and research articles	4,687	February 2009
Dr George DuToit	@GoAllergy	Food allergies	5,774	January 2012
Dr Anne Ellis	@DrAnneEllis	General allergy	6,668	February 2012
Dr Tanya Laidlaw	@TanyaLaidlawMD	Aspirin-exacerbated respiratory disease	727	May 2018
Dr Eric Macy	@EricMacyMD	Drug allergies, particularly penicillin allergy	1,090	March 2014
Dr David Stukus	@AllergyKidsDoc	Combating misinformation, general allergy	20,700	April 2013
Dr Brian Vickery	@ATLergist	Oral Immunotherapy	949	May 2018
American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology	@AAAAI_org	Shares important news; geared toward the general public	11,600	March 2013
<i>Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology</i>	@jacionline	Highlights recently published research articles	8,154	April 2010
<i>Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology: In Practice</i>	@JACIInPractice	Highlights recently published research articles	2,834	April 2013