

## **Digital MD: A Novel Social Media and Digital Scholarship Elective**

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### **Background**

Seventy-five percent of medical students use social media, and one in five medical students are creating and using medical educational resources online and connecting with peers and mentors on social networks (e.g. Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, Doximity). Practicing physicians are increasingly utilizing social media as a means to connect with patients, seek advice from peers, and expand their fund of knowledge; at the same time, patients also desire increased digital access to physicians--especially in the wake of the COVID-19 global pandemic.

The current medical curriculum lacks coursework to support student doctors in such digital scholarship and to educate them about the importance of patient confidentiality, online professionalism, and using social media to network with colleagues. Many schools offer policies but rarely provide formal mentorship in this field; online activities are either prohibited or regulated, and rarely mentored or taught. This starkly contrasts the rest of the practice of medicine, which is built upon structured mentorship and reflective practice.

### **Program Objectives**

The Digital MD curriculum was formulated based on student survey, pre-existing materials, and discussion with key stakeholders (physicians, campus digital media, national social media leaders). Digital MD equips learners with the conceptual understanding and technical skills necessary to utilize digital media in their practice. The ultimate outcome is to satisfy an unfulfilled need in medical education and develop effective pedagogy in digital literacy for physicians.

### **Detailed Description**

Digital MD accomplishes its objectives through 7 weekly online modules that involve preparatory work, asynchronous discussion, content creation, and a zoom discussion session.

- Module 1: What is Social Media and Digital Scholarship?
- Module 2: Legal and Ethical Pitfalls of Online Citizenship
- Module 3: Transitioning from Lurker to Contributor/Social Media Activism
- Module 4: Developing a Professional Identity/Personal Branding
- Module 5: Digital Scholarship Educational Theory
- Module 6: Everyone is Creative with Adobe Suite (Guided Lab)
- Module 7: Capstone Presentations, Review, & Feedback

### **Illustrative Example of Results**

Each Digital MD student completes a capstone project in the form of an image, video, or audio contribution to ongoing and current topics in medicine. They are then encouraged to share their piece on social media, engaging with other online citizens in discussions. In March 2020, a student published an evidence-based infographic titled “COVID-19: Myth vs Fact” during a time when much was misunderstood about the novel coronavirus. In December 2020, another student contributed to an ongoing thread with an infographic illustration of COVID-19 outcome statistics, which has garnered well over 20,000 impressions and over 3,000 engagements—including a commentary repost by a well-known MD/MPH and translation into Arabic—despite the student having only created the account ten days prior. These examples, among others, illustrate the immediate and impactful online influence that medical students gain after completing our course.

### **Key Points**

- Social media is an important and increasingly critical part of communication and professionalism
- Resources are available, expanding, and proven to be feasible
- Has meaningful impact on students with creation of capstone projects and enhanced social media engagement with real world impact

### **References**

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