

# Social media proves effective as a tool for antimicrobial stewardship

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A new study from the University of Chicago Medicine examines the use of social media platforms to inform young physicians about proper use of antimicrobial agents such as antibiotics. Currently, as much as 50 percent of all antibiotic use is inappropriate, leading to such unintended consequences such as antibiotic toxicity and increased antimicrobial resistance. Ensuring optimal use of antibiotics continues to be a central public health concern, and medical residents are a central focus of efforts to improve education in this field. But the question remains as to the best way to reach them.

A study by Jennifer Pisano, MD, and colleagues appearing in the *American Journal of Infection Control*, finds that social media platforms - including Facebook and Twitter—provide an effective method to reinforce antimicrobial stewardship programs (ASP) and encourage the use of ASP resources to promote antimicrobial mindfulness among internal medicine residents. The strategy pioneered by the researchers successfully directed medical residents to the appropriate use of clinical pathways.

Over the course of six months, 55 medical residents received Facebook posts and tweets of basic information promoting both educational tools and clinical pathways located on the researchers' hospital's ASP website. The [medical residents](#) also received identical infectious disease and antibiotic knowledge "trivia questions," as well as interspersed questions.

Participants' knowledge of how to use the ASP website increased from 70 percent to 94 percent, while these residents' antibiotic knowledge also improved. Crucially, use of relevant clinical pathways sometimes, frequently, or always increased from 33 percent to 61 percent ( $P = .004$ ).

Each year in the United States, at least 2 million people become infected with bacteria that are resistant to antibiotics and at least 23,000 people die as a direct result of these infections, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The use of antibiotics is the single most important factor leading to [antibiotic resistance](#).

**More information:** Jennifer Pisano et al, Social media as a tool for antimicrobial stewardship, *American Journal of Infection Control* (2016). [DOI: 10.1016/j.ajic.2016.07.005](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajic.2016.07.005)

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