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## HOW TO HASHTAG HEALTHCARE GEOGRAPHICALLY ON SOCIAL MEDIA


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 July 22, 2018  Posted by: admin

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### How to hashtag healthcare geographically on social media

As far as social media in the South African healthcare industry goes, more users are emerging by the day. The issue we still face locally is the effective use of hashtags. hcsmsA is an acronym for Health Care Communications and Social Media South Africa and is one of the many geographic communities which uses the preceding hashtag (#hcsms) (<https://healthsocmed.com/about/>) originally established by a Diabetes e-Patient (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/E-patient>) Scholar named Dana Lewis (<https://youtu.be/kgu-AYSnyZ8>) in 2009. Current global communities include #hcsmsCA (Canada), #hcsmsEU (Europe), #hcsmsIN (India), #hcsmsANZ (Australia) and #hcsmsPH (The Philippines).

Hashtags are represented by the pound or sharp symbol (#) and are coupled with a relevant keyword or phrase (without spaces) in a user's post. First introduced on Twitter by Chris Messina (<https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/30/chris-messina-hashtag-inventor.html>) in August 2007, and then recently introduced on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and search engines like Google afterwards as platform developers questioned their worth. Using a hashtag together with a keyword enables users to follow those conversations by clicking on them. Hashtags also group users by a topic of interest which encourages networking because it makes it easier for them to find each other. Hashtags also help us improve our ability to measure sentiment for big data analytics more precisely because they highlight a keyword in the post which we refer to as metadata (<http://www.hcsmsa.co.za/how-to-compose-tweets-for-healthcare-social-media/>). This could make our online data for healthcare slightly more structured if we use those hashtags strategically.

One of the main purposes of a single geographic hashtag is to bring all diverse healthcare stakeholders together. Other disease hashtags like #HIV (<https://www.symplur.com/healthcare-hashtags/hiv/>) or conference hashtags like #PHASA2019 (<https://www.symplur.com/healthcare-hashtags/phasa2019/>) can be included in a single tweet together with #hcsmsa (<https://www.symplur.com/healthcare-hashtags/hcsmsa/>), but the geographic hashtag helps to define the region when it comes to data analysis instead of relying only on geolocation services which are often unreliable or broader hashtags like #SouthAfrica which can be polluted with various types of datasets besides health, making it more difficult to filter through the noise and take accurate measurements.

The type of information you should disseminate using a geographic hashtag like #hcsmsa includes blogs (both healthcare providers and patients), tips about using hcsms, research articles, patient education, information about emerging technologies, daily health tips, upcoming medical events as well as interesting news during the gathering and any other health-related information. The hcsms communities are generally opposed to using the platform as an advertising opportunity because they can be deemed as SPAM (eg. Pushing sales for your company with repetitive posts about your product. Post it occasionally, but don't exploit members), unreliable and untrustworthy information is also frowned upon (eg. Articles from a questionable resource, therefore check the information carefully before you share it with others in the community). Keep the information quality-orientated so members can develop personally and professionally. You never know who might be listening. As the basic 9 elements of good digital citizenship ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Digital\\_citizen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Digital_citizen)) explain, always think before you post.

Defining your purpose before you choose a hashtag matters too, #therefore #dont #over #hashtag #everything #you #post #because #its #difficult #for #everyone #to #read #and #they #cant #possibly #click #on #all #of #those #hashtags #which #leads #them #off #in #different #directions. Hashtags act as a filing system online, so in others words, don't file posts in irrelevant places where no one can find them, be decisive about where they belong by choosing a hashtag that serves their purpose. A good rule of thumb is to use 2-4 hashtags on Twitter together with a plainly written sentence that entices users

to read your shared resource further. It's also important to know that the number of acceptable hashtags and amount of post characters varies by platform.

Some healthcare users include geographic hashtags on broad keywords like #SouthAfrica as explained, which is not incorrect but isn't recommended if one wants to collect more refined geographic health data because those communities contain a mix of posts ranging from tourism to politics. They do however benefit a mass-marketing campaign targeting the general public quickly, such as during a disease outbreak. As the social web expands like the rest of the internet did, we may begin to question whether those important public health posts will be as easy to see in a users newsfeed if they

are mixed between a plethora of other information relating to a country or if it's better to separate them. One time I will tell as the web evolves further and we all become more agile using coding tactics like #hcsmsa to make it a safe and reliable virtual world we can come to rely on.

One of the best ways to search for reputable healthcare hashtags is on Symplur (<http://www.symplur.com/>) who has curated over 18 000 of them in an online index and worth learning as we move towards the 21st-century of virtual medicine.

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