



EMBRACING SOCIAL MEDIA USE IN EYE CARE

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These platforms are powerful networking tools.

I started using social media more than 10 years ago when blogging was popular. I was a medical student at the time, and I created a blog for my own use to chronicle my life. I posted my workouts, recipes, and personal stories. I didn't expect many readers, but I quickly discovered that people were interested in learning about the life of a medical school student through my blog. At the time, few personal perspectives on premedical and medical school were available, so some gravitated to my journey. I also began making YouTube videos about life in medicine. I interviewed people across different specialties to find out what their lives were like as physicians or surgeons.

Through these early experiences with social media, I developed a love for connecting with other people—both personally and professionally. Now, most of my social media efforts are focused on Instagram. It's been a powerful networking tool, and I've made tons of great friends. When I was interviewing for residency and fellowship, I didn't spend a single night in a hotel because I stayed with friends all over the country, half of whom I met through social media. It sounds crazy, but it's true.

THE INTERSECTION OF PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL

I have one Instagram account and one Twitter account, which are for both personal and professional use. This has benefitted me in both settings, and a recent cross-sectional survey¹ supports my experience (see *Cross-Sectional Study Results Support Social Media as a Tool to Enhance Ophthalmologists' Professional and Personal Growth*).

Personal. I get enormous satisfaction from connecting with other people in both different and similar phases of life. I love that we can share learnings and commiserate together when we need to.

Professional. When I was a resident, my social media use helped me stand out. People knew who I was because they had seen me on Twitter or Instagram. Many opportunities that I've had with ophthalmology societies such as the AAO, ASCRS, and Women in Ophthalmology are because of relationships I've made through social media. It sparked my involvement and engagement on a more national level. I put stuff out there, and it let people get to know me.

I probably get the most satisfaction from people who have messaged me to share that I helped them either choose a career in medicine or inspired them to reach for the balance in life they want. It brings me so much joy.

It was slightly challenging, however, to navigate the transition from being a trainee to a junior attending. I had to decide how I wanted to portray myself on social media—did I want my account to have a professional marketing feel for patients or did I want to stay in the mentorship space for colleagues?

Content for both audiences. In the end, I decided to continue sharing my life in my career and at home authentically. I create content that I think both audiences will enjoy. I have a lot of hobbies, including cooking and gardening, and in the past 2 years, I've had two kids. I find sharing my journey into motherhood and being a surgeon mom especially fulfilling because I get to connect with other doctor moms.

I've had many younger people reach out to me and say, "I've learned so much about what it's like to have a family and practice medicine." As someone who did not have any female role models in medical school, it feels empowering to share with others that they can absolutely have kids and still crush it in their careers. I want people to know they don't have to delay or sacrifice having a family to practice medicine. Anyone can make it work.



Figure. Dr. Tooley attends a conference with her son.

CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY RESULTS SUPPORT SOCIAL MEDIA AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE OPHTHALMOLOGISTS' PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL GROWTH

BY LAURA STRAUB, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

The use of social media currently extends beyond personal development, crossing over into professional development thanks to a variety of factors, including the lack of in-person engagement during the COVID-19 pandemic. Approximately 40% of ophthalmologists use social media in a professional context,¹ but what constitutes a professional context is largely unknown. During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, ophthalmologists from six different practices conducted a cross-sectional survey to determine how their peers used social media for career development, practice management, work-life balance, and mentorship and networking.²

Ophthalmology trainees and practitioners who were active on social media between November and December 2020 were sent a 40-item online questionnaire via social media channels and email listservs from BMC Vision and *MillennialEYE* (now *Bookmarked*)^{*}. The study aimed to characterize the usage patterns of respondents; identify the motivation for and challenges of social media use for personal and professional reasons based on sex, race, age, and career stage (ie, trainees [residents and fellows], early career [0-10 years in practice], and late career [> 11 years in practice]); and ascertain the perceived benefits and drawbacks of social media use in ophthalmology. The investigators analyzed the quantitative and qualitative responses using descriptive and basic statistics and a thematic analysis, respectively. The questionnaire included items related to career planning and/or advancement, workplace dynamics, practice management, financial planning, work-life balance, parenting, and mentorship (ie, interpersonal education and networking with professional colleagues).

A total of 149 individuals completed the survey, with a higher percentage of women than men responding (67.1% vs 32.2%). Additionally, 69% of all respondents were married, and 49% had children. More than half of respondents (56.4%) were between the ages of 25 and 35 years, with 35.5% still in training and 25.5% in their first 5 years of practice. Most respondents (94%) had professional social media accounts on Instagram, LinkedIn, or Facebook, with 64% spending at least 1 hour per day on social media for various reasons, including staying in touch with family, promoting their practices and/or professional services, educating patients and/or the public about ophthalmology, sharing clinical and/or surgical cases with colleagues, and finding mentorship and/or networking opportunities.

Respondents had both positive and negative views of social media use in ophthalmology. In addition to the advantages cited, respondents acknowledged that social media includes curated content, and they saw value in using social media in moderation and to supplement other professional outlets.

USING SOCIAL MEDIA TO OVERCOME CHALLENGES

The use of social media to overcome personal and professional challenges varied among individuals of different ages, sexes, and career stages.

Age. Respondents younger than 45 years of age spent more time on social media and were more likely to experience challenges with practice management and turn to social media for guidance. Older respondents were more likely to use social media as a platform to provide mentorship.

Sex. Women were more likely than men to use social media for support in addressing workplace discrimination, work-life balance, parenting, and mentorship and to discuss and advocate gender issues.

Career stage. Trainees were more likely than early- and late-career individuals to use social media for financial literacy education and for help with career development, practice management, and financial planning. Respondents in the early and late career stages reported more difficulty with practice management, and those in the early career stage reported social media to be helpful in addressing parenting challenges (Figure).

CONCLUSION

The investigators concluded that social media has the potential to enhance the personal and professional growth of ophthalmologists. Women, trainees, and younger surgeons seemed to gain the most benefit from social media through education and community building. The study results also showed that social media was helpful for addressing challenges associated with workplace discrimination, work-life imbalance, parenting, and mentorship.

1. Al-Kharsan H, Lazzarini TA, Fan KC, et al. Social media in ophthalmology: an analysis of use in the professional sphere. *Health Informatics J.* 2020;26(4):2967-2975.

2. He B, Tanya SM, Costello F, Kherani F, Shamie N, Zhu D. Navigating personal and professional development through social media in ophthalmology. *Clin Ophthalmol.* 2022;16:2263-2274.

^{*}Bookmarked is a sister publication to CRST Global | Europe Edition

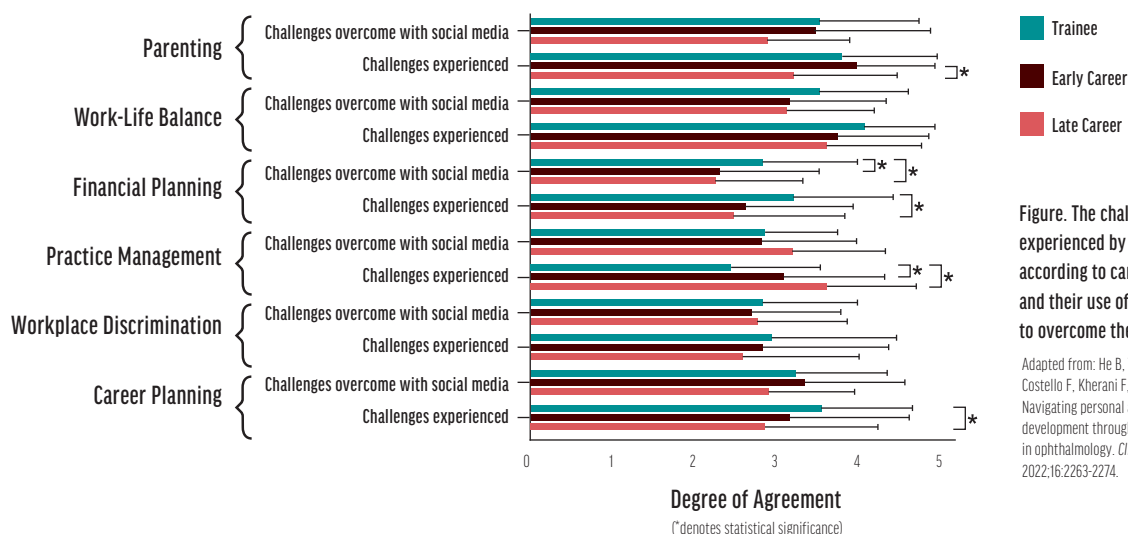


Figure. The challenges experienced by respondents according to career stage and their use of social media to overcome them.

Adapted from: He B, Tanya SM, Costello F, Kherani F, Shamie N, Zhu D. Navigating personal and professional development through social media in ophthalmology. *Clin Ophthalmol.* 2022;16:2263-2274.

► CHAMPIONS OF CHANGE

I also feel strongly about integrating my family into my work life. I bring my kids to work events and conferences (Figure; see pg 71), and I share about it on social media. I think if we want young ophthalmologists to be engaged in their careers, we can no longer have a firm divide between personal and professional lives. It's important to me that this is reflected on social media.

I ask myself from time to time if I'm OK with patients seeing the content I post. At the end of the day, I don't want to feel like I've filtered or censored myself. Most of my patients love following me on social media.

They come in and say, "I saw your Instagram. Your kids are so cute," or "I watched your YouTube video, and I love your farm and your garden." It helps my patients feel more connected with me, and it builds their trust in me. Truthfully, we have only 10 or 15 minutes with a patient. If social media helps build a more personal connection with them because they can see who I am outside of the clinic, I think that's a good thing.

CONCLUSION

Social media is such a great way to connect and have a personal dialogue with colleagues from around the world and even build rapport with patients.

The ophthalmologists on Instagram are a community, and we share each other's work. If someone posts a great educational video, we share it. Social media is a nice way to support each other. I also think it's a career development tool. When I have an opportunity to nominate somebody to be a speaker, I immediately think: Who is active on Instagram? Who do I see posting about ophthalmology? They are the people whom I lean on first. I would recommend being active on social media to anybody who wants to become more engaged in the ophthalmology community. ■