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SEPTEMBER 2017 | A periodic e-bulletin to share results of organ donation and transplantation projects funded by the Division of Transplantation.

Social Media Strategies Enhance Campaigns that Target 18–24 Year Olds

Two projects using social media strategies added 11,000+ donor registrations



More than 85 percent of college students use social networking and that percentage is even higher (96 percent) among 18- to 19-year-old students. Two Division of Transplantation grant projects saw increases in donor registrations when they added social media strategies to organ donation campaigns targeting college and university students.

Strategies that work:

- Research popular social media platforms
- Work with student organizations (national or local)
- Host unique campaign website with information about the campaign and organ donation
- Create sharable content for students' personal social media platforms



From 2008 to 2010, **Gift of Life Michigan** added social media to the already successful annual Wolverine-Buckeye Challenge, a competition between students

from University of Michigan and Ohio State University leading up to a fall football game between the two schools. The school that registered the most organ donors each year earned a trophy and bragging rights.

Over a span of three years, Gift of Life Michigan measured donor registrations first without social media strategies (Year 1), then with targeted Facebook advertising (Year 2), and finally with Facebook advertising and a Facebook fan page and widgets (Year 3). The widgets were electronic packets of information that students posted on their personal social media platforms. Widgets are considered a form of electronic word of mouth or eWOM. In this case they allowed students to easily share their support of organ donation with their friends and family.

The increase was greatest during Year 3 when Facebook advertising, a Facebook fan page, and widgets were incorporated. That year, University of Michigan tallied 1,755 donor registrations, up from 224 the first year and 451 the second year.

“It was a worthwhile addition to the challenge,” said Jennifer Tislerics, special events and partnerships coordinator at Gift of Life Michigan. “I would recommend using social media in college campaigns but I recommend looking at the channels that are most popular with that age group now.”

Student organization serves as social media catalyst

UW Organ and Tissue Donation found that social media strategies when implemented through a student organization were effective in motivating donor registrations and increasing students’ awareness of and support for organ donation. They worked with the Collegiate American Marketing Association (CAMA), a national association with approximately 10,000 members and more than 300 collegiate chapters.

Social media interventions were used for the bulk of the campaign which ran from 2009 to 2010. These included an AMASavesLives website in addition to a blog, e-mails, online newsletters, and social media profiles. The project also posted videos about organ donation and transplantation to the AMASavesLives website and Facebook page and gave an award for the best student-directed video about organ donation. Traditional interventions, such as campus newspaper advertisements and direct mail letters, were used only during the first year.

The project resulted in 9,000 registrations. Surveys given each year showed there was significant increase in familiarity with and social support for organ donation and a reduction in myths. According to the project coordinators, this was important because creating a relevant connection to organ donation for students is key to motivating

them to register as donors and to spread the word.

“Providing students with knowledge about organ donation and organ donor registration, reasons to become a donor, how donor registration helps others, and information for overcoming organ donation myths and perceived inequities should all be part of social-based communication efforts,” said James Peltier, principal researcher from the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater.

The project generated 21,898 visits to the campaign website, 4,476 Facebook likes and more than 7,000 public posts/comments on Facebook, Twitter, and the blog. Because of the positive results, Donate Life America and other sponsors provided ongoing funding for the 2011–2012 and 2012–2013 school years.

Learn more about these projects using the resources below.

Want to know more?

Efforts to Increase Solid Organ and Tissue Donation: University Donor Drive: Increasing Donor Registration through Synchronized Social Identity and Social Networking

Principal Researcher: Sandi Smith, Michigan State University, smiths@msu.edu, 517-353-3715
Gift of Life Michigan Contact: Jennifer Tislerics, Special Events and Partnerships Coordinator, jtislerics@giftoflifemichigan.org, 734-922-1048

Hitt R, Gidley R, Smith S, Liang Y. Traditional vs. social networking routes for organ donation registrations in a competition-based campaign. *Journal of Communication in Healthcare*. 2014. Vol. 7, No. 3:197-207.

Smith S, Hitt R, Park H, Walther J, Liang Y, Hsieh G. An Effort to Increase Organ Donor Registration Through Intergroup Competition and Electronic Word of Mouth. *Journal of Health Communication*. 2015. 0:1-11.

Utilization of Social Media, Personalized Messages, and Mass Communications to Increase Solid Organ Donations by US University Students, Their Families, and Their Friends

Principal Investigator: Dr. Anthony M. D'Alessandro, University of Wisconsin Hospital and Clinics, adalessandro@uwhealth.org, 608-263-9903
Principal Researcher: James Peltier, University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, pletierj@uww.edu, 608-220-0619

D'Alessandro A, Peltier J, Dahl A. A large-scale qualitative study of the potential use of social media by university students to increase awareness and support for organ donation. *Progress in Transplantation*. 2012. Vol. 22, No. 2:183-191.

Peltier J, D'Alessandro A, Dahl A, Hugh Feeley T. A sequential decision framework for increasing college students' support for organ donation and organ donor registration. *Progress in Transplantation*. 2012. Vol. 22, No. 3:323-332.

D'Alessandro A, Peltier J, Dahl A. Use of social media and college student organizations to increase support for organ donation and advocacy: a case report. *Progress in Transplantation*. 2012. Vol. 22, No. 4:436-441.

D'Alessandro A, Peltier J, Dahl A. The Impact of Social, Cognitive and Attitudinal Dimensions on College Students' Support for Organ Donation. *American Journal of Transplantation*. 2012. 12:152-161.

This publication lists non-federal resources in order to provide additional information to consumers. The views and content in these resources have not been formally approved by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) or the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). Neither HHS nor HRSA endorses the products or services of the listed resources.