How effective is Twitter to share cancer clinical trial information and recruit?

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Could Twitter be a way to communicate with the public about cancer clinical trials and increase awareness and patient recruitment? A new research letter published online by *JAMA Oncology* considers that question.

Mina S. Sedrak, M.D., of the Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, and coauthors conducted a pilot study and analyzed the content of 1,516 tweets. The tweets were from among a total of 15,346 unique tweets that contained "lung cancer" over a little more than two weeks in January 2015.

About 83 percent of the tweets in the sample (1,260 of 1,516) contained lung cancer-specific content; most of the lung cancer-related tweets focused on support or prevention and were written by individuals, according to the results. About 17.5 percent of the tweets in the sample (221 of 1,260) were related to clinical trials; only one tweet linked to a patient recruitment website, the authors report.

"Social media could become a very useful tool for clinical researchers but may also pose some challenges with respect to both noncoercive content and the assurance of privacy, both of which the IRBs [institutional review boards] will need to consider carefully. Future efforts are needed to explore whether Twitter can emerge as a viable medium for promoting accrual to clinical trials," the article concludes.

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