



## Editorial

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As editor in chief, I deal spend a lot of time on my computer. The beauty of the Internet is this: I am in Tennessee, the Catholic Medical Association (CMA) offices are in Pennsylvania, our publisher has offices in California, and our production team is in India. Computers make a level of collaboration unthinkable in the past a matter of course today.

Of course, the world of computers also poses some significant problems. In every workplace, there are those whose computer skills are no match for what the job demands. Some of our authors find the submission process a challenge (and anyone who has worked with me knows that computers and I have reached what is best described as an armed truce). Physicians who are computer-illiterate are in danger of being left behind in practice—or worse yet, forced out altogether. Social media has become a force in society and in politics and too often a source of serious friction. Mental health professionals warn of isolation, depression, anxiety, shortened attention spans, even risk of suicide as a result of our new way of communicating. In many ways, the substitution of electronic conversations has diminished our ability to talk one-on-one and with respect.

Yet, absent some major crash in the world's grid, computers and all that they bring are here to stay and it isn't all bad news. The Internet and mobile platforms allow us to keep in touch with distant friends and relatives. The same 24/7 news cycle that heightens our anxiety and creates "recreational outrage" can also help us broaden our horizons of care and concern and can help us mobilize action in ways we could only dream of a generation or two ago.

It's for this reason that *The Linacre Quarterly* has moved into the arena of social media. To fail to do so would be to ignore a major avenue of modern communication. This was driven home in the past few weeks by a series of circumstances that illustrate how the world of print, the world of ideas, and the Internet and social media coincide. An article evaluating the responses of women who have had abortions was published in an academic journal, a

journal that would, in itself, be read by a relative few people. It was picked up by a newspaper, which published an article on the topic. There ensued discussion on the article, on everything from possible selection bias to the difference between self-reported symptoms and assessments of mental health, on both Twitter and Facebook. Whether minds were changed or not isn't clear, but the discussion was lively and brisk and wide-ranging. People thought about, and "conversed" about, something in a new way. Moreover, they were not just discussing one on one with a friend, they were also witnesses to other discussions that in turn brought up other questions and other ideas. Social media is reshaping the way we interact.

Consider the following:

- Even "old folks" use social media regularly. Some estimates are that up to 80 percent of every generation uses one form of social media or another at least once a day. For Boomers, keeping in touch with grandchildren is a motivating force for usage and skill; for younger generations, social media is simply a part of their lives and increasingly necessary for their work.
- Communication patterns have shifted. Older generations still converse by phone; younger generations more often by text.
- The older—or younger—the person, the more focused the social media use. The generations in the middle, by contrast, tend to use a wide range of social media.

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- YouTube is increasingly important as a source of information. Younger generations especially exploit it to learn a variety of things—from how to install a dishwasher to what the Church teaches.
- Reliance on traditional sources of news has also changed. The younger the person, the more likely he or she will get news from a variety of interest-directed (and therefore more self-selected) sources delivered directly to a mobile device and available on demand, rather than on the news at 6 and 11.
- Reasons for engagement with social media vary—almost everyone who uses social media does so to stay in touch with friends and family and to maintain a sense of community. But increasingly, social media is also important in the delivery of “hard” content—news, information, and commentary. Businesses use media platforms for “virtual” meetings and for collaboration spaces.
- Preferred platforms vary according to generation (Facebook is more and more a province of the older generations; Instagram a preferred application among younger users) and personality (some users want in-depth information; others have a need for smaller bits of information that can be assessed quickly). All users gravitate to visual images in preference to text, regardless of age.
- Mobile devices increase the reliance on social media as well as its accessibility.
- Print and broadcast media are becoming increasingly less important—though still valuable—in the face of competing information streams that are more convenient, accessible, and less expensive.
- More and more, the discussion of important issues in community is happening in a virtual, cyber-community and triggered by content that raises an important question or makes a particular point.
- There is little vetting or filtering of information on social media. Subject to usage agreements, anyone with access can post and disseminate information and many users do not stop to check facts. This means that there is the potential for wide distribution of excellent content—but also for content that isn’t as good.

Social media platforms continue to evolve, and their patterns of use will continue to change. At present, *The Linacre Quarterly* is active on Facebook

and Twitter and is developing an Instagram presence. Snapchat is a preferred platform for younger generations, but we at *The Linacre Quarterly* have yet to leverage that platform or YouTube.

If we are really to get the message of Catholic medicine out to a world that needs it, we need to be active in all the ways that modern people communicate with each other, from old-fashioned print to the emerging video platforms. If we are to share the Good News of Christ as it relates to medicine, if we are really to bring Christ to the bedside, we need to do it in a way that makes us heard. These days, that means using social media.

Social media influencers (people with a large and devoted following on any particular platform) are part of the modern cyber-landscape, even in medicine, and they do just what the name implies. For better or worse, they *influence*. Their medical niches range from holistic medicine to issues advocacy, healthcare reform, and the effects of technology in medicine. The CMA and *The Linacre Quarterly* have something valuable to contribute to those conversations and our message isn’t always heard. To remedy that, we here at *The Linacre Quarterly* are looking at those who have already showed the way: Bishop Robert Barron and *Word on Fire*; the Daughters of St. Paul (#medianuns) and our own CMA podcasters as well as secular influencers as models, guides, and inspiration.

You can find *The Linacre Quarterly* on Facebook (The Linacre Quarterly), Twitter (@TheLinacre), and Instagram (the\_Linacre\_Quarterly). Please take the time to check out our content; there is a lot there for interest to the Catholic medical community, particularly on our Facebook and Twitter accounts. Encourage your friends, especially those who are already adept at social media, to follow us and forward content to others; that’s how the word spreads. Send us tips on content we might be interested in exploring, sharing, or responding to.

*The Linacre Quarterly* has a unique role to play in the Catholic mission. Everybody needs medical care at one time or another, healing from sickness of body and often healing of spirit and mind that go with it. Bringing Christ into a medical arena increasingly dominated by cost controls, outcomes measurements, and a devaluation of the human person when costs and efforts of care are too great, Catholic medicine has a lot to offer to a hurting world. It’s up to us to bring that message as effectively as we can in as many ways as we can.

Catholic medicine is good medicine for the whole person. We mean to spread the word.