

FROM THE BENCH TO THE FIELD: How Twitter is Connecting the Blood Banking Community

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You've heard about it. You may even have seen others doing it. But, you may not be sure why you need to be engaged: Why use Twitter for professional reasons? Are you in a mixed field? In the time it takes to perform an immediate-spin crossmatch, we'll seroconvert you from Twitter neg to Twitter pos.

First, Twitter is much more than following celebrity scandals and political controversies. For the past few years Twitter, along with Facebook and Instagram, have been important tools for advancing knowledge within the medical arena. On an international scale, countless physicians, health care workers and scientists have begun to collaborate and share medical developments with just a click, a post or a tweet. Within transfusion medicine, renowned leaders and educators, including Joe Chaffin, MD, and Sue Johnson, MSTM, MT(ASCP)SBB, are using Twitter, which is becoming an "indispensable tool for blood banking news." Additionally, AABB is striving to expand the transfusion medicine Twitter community by highlighting the latest opinions, research and

educational opportunities to help the field advance.

Twitter is a way to generate what we call "mindful collaboration," or the ability to network, learn, teach, share and, quite literally, connect with people throughout the world. An innovative session at the recent AABB Annual Meeting in Boston (#AABB18) provided a great example. On Sunday morning, Oct. 14, Chaffin presented an education session, "Blood Bank Guy Essentials LIVE." During the session, Justin Kreuter, MD, was "live-tweeting," or posting messages on Twitter in real time, from the stage, which provided a portal of live-access to these discussions to people throughout the world as they were taking place. Even those not physically sitting in Room L156 at the Boston Convention and Exhibition Center were present virtually. During the conference, participants posted 1,934 tweets highlighting the annual gathering. These tweets covered key points from sessions, pictures and more. We collected data from these tweets (because that's what blood bankers do, right?) and found that more than 4 million impressions, or views, were generated over the course of four days.



Adam Booth, MD; Aaron Shmookler, MD; Daniela Hermelin, MD; Justin Kreuter, MD; and Joe Chaffin, MD.

Other leaders in the fields of transfusion medicine and cellular therapies have appeared on Twitter through real-time Twitter chats that highlight scholarly and peer-reviewed works, as well as other resources. For example, participants shared useful and practical advice during an AABB Professional Engagement Program Twitter chat (#AABBPEtalk) on April 5. This chat, which featured Sue Johnson, MSTM, MT(ASCP)SBB, fostered an exchange of ideas about serologic testing of red blood cell antibodies and patient blood management.

Donor recruitment provides another example of how social media platforms — such as Twitter — are growing rapidly in the field of transfusion medicine. The October issue of *Transfusion* contained an article that highlighted the results of a survey of more than 3,000 donors. The article demonstrated that following friends and family, social media resources are the second most common way to motivate first time donors at their facility. Using Twitter to spread information can produce immediate and significant results during times of need or urgent causes. Following the Oct. 27 shooting in Pittsburgh, thousands of individuals tweeted about donating blood to help replenish a shortage of red blood cells.

Finally, the international spectrum of blood bankers who cross-talk with each other is truly remarkable. For example, we were curious how other institutions manage suspected transfusion reactions in patients who experience a fever while receiving platelets (See screen shot of the tweet to the right). Do they automatically culture the platelet unit? What other symptoms qualify, and what degree in temperature change warrants concern? Daniela Hermelin, MD, posted a question on Twitter directed to a few clinical colleagues. Within minutes, experts

from four different countries — Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States — provided instant feedback that not only supported this author's personal standard of care but actually improved it. In fact, Yulia Lin, MD, FRCPC, of the University of Toronto, provided a link to *BloodyEasy4*, a free downloadable transfusion reaction guide for nurses and clinicians.

From immunohematology to patient blood management, and from cellular therapies to apheresis therapy, you will find experts contributing relevant up-to-date information covering every area of transfusion medicine in a single focused arena, enhancing collaboration on a global scale. The future of Twitter is a 4+. Don't miss the opportunity to grow with AABB as we continue to expand using our online presence and innovative resources in transfusion medicine and cellular therapies that provide multidisciplinary international learning and engagement anywhere, anytime. Meet new friends. We'll be excited to see you on Twitter! ■

