



What's up on the utilization of “What's app” among pediatric residents?

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Background – Modern social media has become an integral part of our daily lives, not only at the personal level but also at the professional level as well. No two experts have the same opinion on the impact of social media on the modern society. While many see them as a positive tool that increases productivity via better connectivity, others see them as addictive and counterproductive.

There have been several numerous publications on the utilization of handheld technology in accessing medical information^{1,2,3}. However, there seem to be less attention toward the use of Social Media in handheld devices in the field of graduate medical education. Despite that, some recent studies have shed some light on the impact of social media on medical students⁴ and graduate medical education alike^{5,6}. Most of those studies provided evidence that the use of social media such as “Face Book” and “Twitter” has had positive impact on residency programs and graduate medical education in general.

To our knowledge, as of today, there are no studies on the utilization of “What's App” and it's impact in the field of graduate medical education.

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1. Methods

This is a cross sectional study in which a 20 questions survey was distributed among the resident of Tawam Pediatric Residency Program to explore the utilization of What's App program among them and the impact of this use on their daily clinical and educational activities. This program allows the creation of a "Group" under the leadership of an "Administrator" who can add or delete members to the group. In turn, any message posted by any member of the group will be read by all other members instantly. Most of the questions in our survey focused on the activities conducted through a group called "Residents" which was created by the program director (PD) and included residents of all levels, in addition to all the members of the pediatric residency office which include the program director, the two associate program directors (APD) and the program coordinator (PC). Figure one provides some examples of the messages that typically gets exchanged in this group

2. Results

The survey was completed by 32 out of the 35 Tawam pediatric residents at the time of the study all of whom were members in the What's App group: "Residents"

All of the surveyed residents reported accessing their What's App daily during working hours. 18% of the responders said that they access the program at least once a day, 15% do that at least once per hour, 10% more than once per hour, but interestingly, 56% of the responders said they access the group whenever a message arrives. More interestingly, 100% of them said that they access the program at least once a day after hours and during off days, with up to 72% of them accessing the program whenever a message is posted. (Figure 2 & 3))

In addition, residents were asked to comment if they agree with the following ten statements

1. The What's App group is useful in sharing interesting cases.
2. The What's App group is useful in sharing and revising MCQs. 75% of the surveyed residents agreed with that while the rest were either not sure (16%) or disagreed (9%).

3. The What's App group is useful in asking for help during the call. 66% of the surveyed residents agreed with that while the rest were either not sure (22%) or disagreed (18%).
4. The What's App group is useful for current patients' updates
5. The What's App group is a tool for patients' Hand Over
6. The What's App group is helpful in coordinating the residents' continuity clinic
7. The What's App group is a useful tool to receive communications from the Program Director (PD), Associate Program Director (APD) and the chief residents
8. The What's App group is an acceptable tool for last-minute announcements
9. Overall, I believe that the Residents Group has been useful more than being a burden

Residents' responses to those statements are summarized in figure four

3. Discussion

To our knowledge, this is the first study to look at the utilization and impact of What's App on graduate medical education. This free program has gained rapid popularity because of its ease of use and its capability to share not only instant messages but also media in the form of voice messages; and video and photo files. Another added message is the capability to share messages with a large group of people at the same time.

In our survey, the vast majority of residents agreed that it is a very useful tool for immediate communication since up to 72% of the group members check their messages instantly even after hours and during off days. The vast majority of the surveyed residents believed that it is a useful tool for sharing knowledge (eg: MCQ questions and interesting cases), for patient care (getting patients updates and gathering information on old patients), and for last minute announcements and communications with the program director and chief residents.

On the other hand the vast majority believed that it is not a reliable tool for hand over.

4. Conclusion

Like all other social media programs, What's App has its own advantages and disadvantages. While some may feel that it could be quite distracting during working hours, our study revealed that the benefits of this program are too many. If utilized properly, this program could serve in connecting the programs leadership (PD, APD, PC and the chiefs) with the residents and improve communication. It could also improve residents learning and patient care by sharing interesting cases, posting challenging questions and gathering patients' information instantaneously. More studies are needed to look at different aspects of this great program and tool such as: would messages on What's App ever replace official emails? And how reliable would a medical opinion be if it was based on a photo shared in this program?

References

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Figure 1

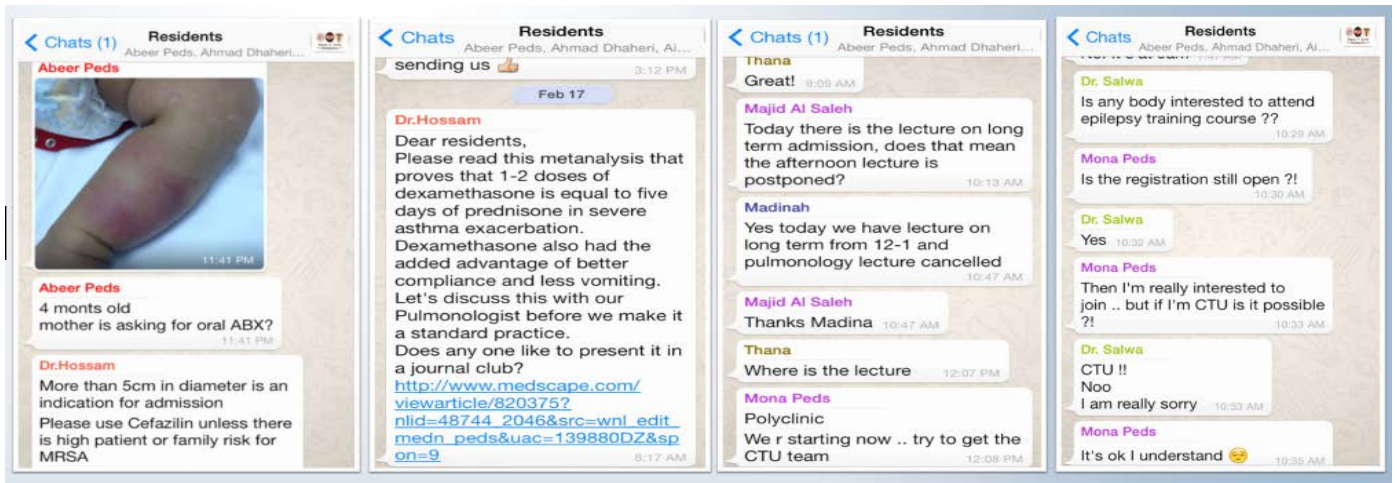


Figure 2

How often do you access the group during working hours?

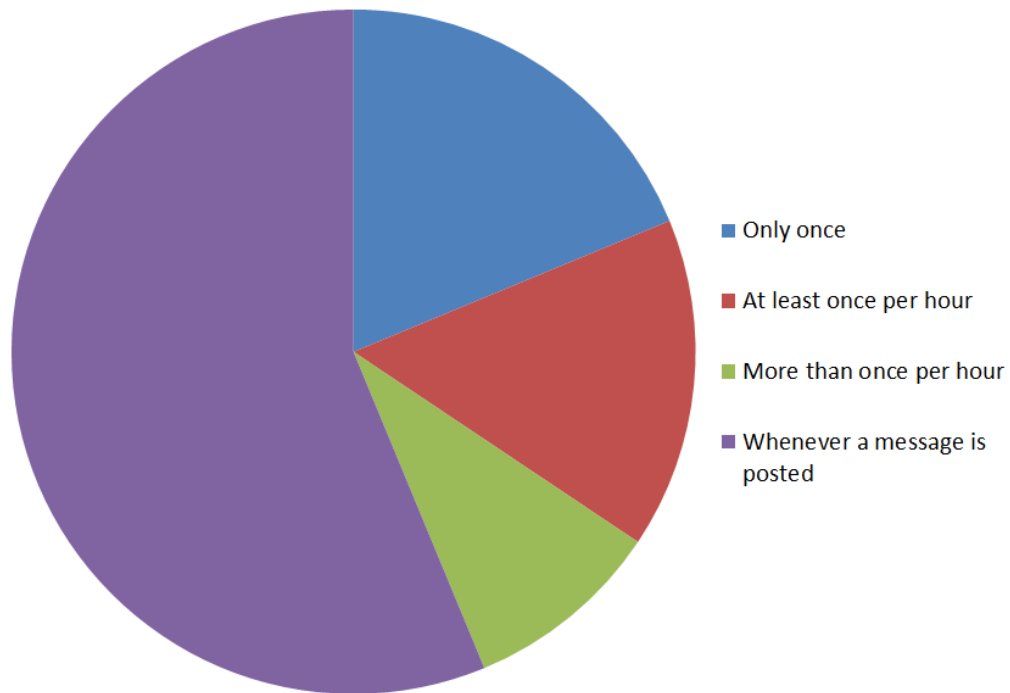


Figure 3

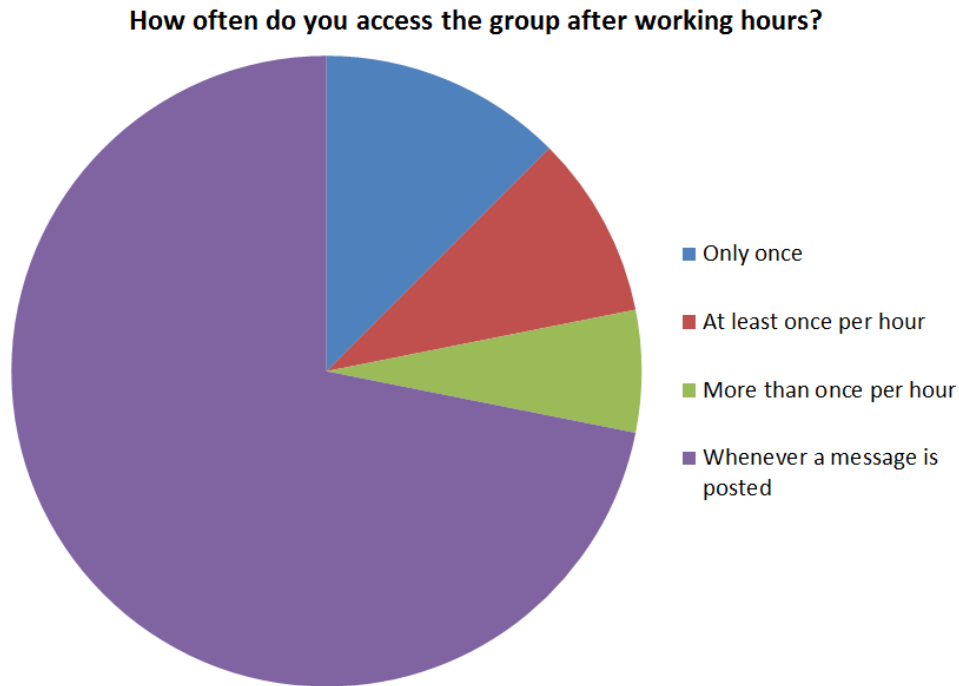


Figure 4

Resident’s opinion on the usefulness of the Residents’ Group in What's App

