Evaluating the Educational Utility of Ophthalmology-Related Hashtags on Instagram: A Content Analysis of Educational, Social, and Advertising Posts

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Background:

- Social media platforms, such as Instagram, are increasingly utilised within medical education due to their visual and interactive nature, engaging both healthcare professionals and the public.
- In ophthalmology, where imaging and diagnostic precision are key, Instagram provides an ideal platform for disseminating high-quality educational content.
- With over 38 million users in the UK, Instagram offers a substantial opportunity for educational outreach.
- However, such content can be overshadowed by social or commercial material.
- This study aims to evaluate Instagram's utility for ophthalmology education by analysing posts associated with the most commonly used ophthalmology-related hashtags.

Aim:

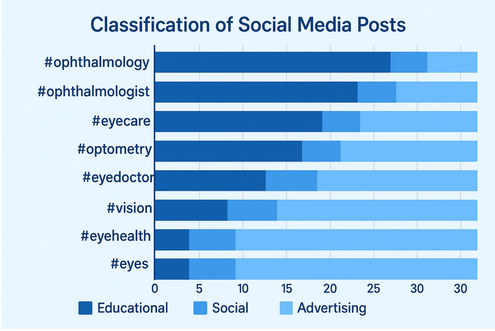
- To assess the proportion of educational content within Instagram posts using the hashtags #ophthalmology, #ophthalmologist, #eyecare, #optometry, #eyedoctor, #vision, #eyehealth, #eye, #optometrist, and #eyes.

Method:

- An Instagram search was performed using the specified hashtags, identified from https://best-hashtags.com/ as the most popular ophthalmology-related terms.
- For each hashtag, the first 30 posts were reviewed and categorised as educational (e.g. diagnostic imaging, surgical techniques, case discussions, patient guidance), social (e.g. lifestyle tips, personal experiences), or advertising (e.g. posts promoting products, services, or commercial interests).
- The proportions of these categories were then calculated and compared across all hashtags.

Results:

- The distribution of posts showed the following proportions of educational to social content:



Results continued:

- Educational content included diagnostic imaging, surgical techniques, case discussions, and patient education, while social posts ranged from lifestyle tips to personal experiences.

Discussion:

- Our findings suggest that Instagram can serve as a valuable platform for ophthalmology education, though the educational yield varies significantly according to the hashtag chosen. Specialty-specific hashtags associated more closely with professional practice (e.g. #ophthalmology, #optometry) hosted a higher proportion of educational posts.
- In contrast, more general hashtags attracted predominantly social content, while a few others carried a notable advertising presence. This highlights the importance of employing targeted hashtags and promoting recognised, standardised tags to increase the visibility and credibility of educational material.

Discussion continued:

Establishing professionally endorsed hashtags—potentially introduced by bodies such as the Royal College of Ophthalmologists—could unify the community, encourage quality control, and guide both professionals and learners towards reliable, evidence-based content.

Instagram Recommendation

Instagram holds considerable promise as a supplementary educational resource in ophthalmology, provided that its use is strategic and accompanied by robust quality indicators. By utilising more specialised, professionally validated hashtags, educators, clinicians, and institutions can leverage the platform's reach and visual capabilities.

Such an approach could foster a dynamic online educational ecosystem, ensuring that practitio-ners and learners remain well-informed and engaged with the most current developments in ophthalmic practice and research.