

## EDITORIAL VIEW

# 'The Anaesthetist' group on facebook; offering 24 X 7 CME through social media

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### **ABSTRACT**

Facebook has revolutionized the concept of socializing on internet and transformed the world into a small village in the true sense. This social medium offers you an opportunity to post your thoughts, your pictures, cartoons, drawings and even videos. This flexibility has led to its vast use for group activities of very diverse type and nature.

Probably the most positive use of facebook is in the shape of education, and healthcare professionals have used it for spreading public awareness as well as for offering highly professional instruction and education. 'The Anaesthetist' is a group run by anesthetists and meant for the anesthetists. The author has played a very active role in steering the group activity towards formation of a solid forum of coaching and instruction, from the group on facebook to formation of 'The Anaesthetist Society' and from group discussions to international conferences.

**Key words:** Social medium; Facebook; Education

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As a child we often travelled by train from one part of India to another and in those days it was always a long journey. One of the things that you notice while travelling in the Indian subcontinent is sharing; people sharing their food, books, magazines, space and happiness. Sharing comes naturally in this part of the world. People like to share whatever little they have. You don't have to be rich to share, you just need to have the will to do so. We are doing just the same on our facebook group – 'The Anaesthetist',<sup>1</sup> sharing whatever little knowledge and experience we have, to make our journey a pleasant one. Thanks to Mark Zuckerberg, facebook allows us not only to share our thoughts, but also images and videos. This makes it an ideal platform for teaching and learning.

Nothing is good or bad, but thinking makes it so, and same goes for the use of social media. Many believe social media to be bad; many believe it to be an addiction and affecting people adversely. It is a powerful tool. It can help many when used appropriately, especially in the field of education. Social media can be used for 'education without borders or boundaries'. Regardless of your place of residence on the globe, regardless of your time zone, you can be a part of this educational tool. 'The Anaesthetist' is one such platform that continues to provide an excellent educational resource to many across the globe. This is truly 'education without

borders' using social media.

Henry Ford once said "anyone who stops learning is old, whether at twenty or eighty. Anyone who keeps learning stays young. The greatest thing in life is to keep your mind young".<sup>1</sup> 'The Anaesthetist' group personifies this philosophy, we have members from novice postgraduates who are new to the specialty to anaesthetists who are in their 60's and 70's, and still practicing anaesthesia. The members range from those working in the most modern institutions, to members working in limited resource centers. There are members from all over the world and it is truly an international forum for education in anaesthesia but heavily skewed towards the developing world.

As we grow older in our specialty, it is but natural to get comfortable with things that we do every day; day in, day out. During our specialty training period, we are trained in all branches of anaesthesia. We tend to focus more on the specialties we work with, becoming more specialized in our own fields and get cut-off from other areas. It is only when we are faced with a surprise/challenge or an unexpected change in our routine that we get shaken up and may feel a dire need for some advice or tips. Even if you work alone and are in a difficult situation, now you can get real-time advice from the members of the group. Thanks to the internet and smart phone, we are all globally

## 'the anaesthetist' group on facebook

connected. A helpful response from someone from the other end of the world may let you save a life. Thanks to the power of social media and networking.

'The Anaesthetist' as a facebook group was started way back in 2012 by Dr. Vivek Gupta from Delhi (India) and I was asked to moderate the group. Later on Dr Hetal Vadera was enrolled as another admin. Dr Piyush Mallick is also one of the powerful driving forces in the group providing necessary energy to move forward. In 2014, the group was registered as a society in New Delhi with the efforts of Dr Anil Sharma, being the first society that originated from a facebook group/ social media, 'The Anaesthetist Society', commonly known as TAS.

'The Anaesthetist' advocates, 'respect for everyone, irrespective of age and position'. With this principle in mind, the group discussed interesting cases as well as hypothetical questions, sharing knowledge and skills. Members are required to declare consent from patient or parents (in case of children) and ensure that no personal information of the patient is revealed. Educational procedure videos and images are shared by the experts to be followed by scientific discussions. Unusual scenarios, clinical problems, 'do's and don'ts' and side-effects / complications encountered in day to day practice are discussed for the benefit of all. The group introduces and familiarizes the members to recent trends in anaesthesia and technology. Historical aspects are given equal importance as to the recent trends in anaesthesia. Current guidelines and publications are discussed and disseminated.

The group has organized workshops on regional anaesthesia at a very low cost, from most advanced techniques (US Guided nerve blocks) to nerve blocks for the masses (PNS and Loss of resistance blocks). It organized its first international conference TACON 2014 in New Delhi on 15-16 November 2014. The next conference (TACON 2016) is scheduled to be held in Ahmedabad (Gujarat, India), on 27-28th August 2016, to be preceded by pre-conference workshops on 26th August.

The group celebrates World Anaesthesia Day every year with an aim to inculcate feeling of pride amongst its members towards the specialty they practice. It is our aim to educate the general public about the work we do and in this regard Dr Surajit Giri has been a pioneer, winning many awards.

It is said that nothing is perfect in this world, we learn as much by others' failings as by their teachings.

## REFERENCES

1. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/indianaesthetist/?fref=ts>
2. Henry Ford Quotes. Available on; <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/h/henryford103927.html>

Examples of imperfection are just as useful for achieving perfection as are models of competence and perfection, we have our imperfections too. All the posts have to be approved by admins and at times this can delay the publication of the post on the group and the responses. Sometimes there are so many posts that some get ignored as they may not be as interesting as others. Since the responses are written and may not be expressed in the desired way, there are chances that the person may be misunderstood and can lead to unpleasantness. Participation is another issue, not everyone participates and many a time you don't even know if people have read the posts or not, there are many silent learners. Just like any class, there will be some who are very forthcoming and active but most will learn silently. Facebook allows you to show your presence by clicking on "Like" and it would encourage people if they did that every time a post or response is read.



Figure 1: Logo of the group designed by Dr. Sunny Bhasin

In brief it can be said that 'The Anaesthetist' provides continuous CME in anaesthesia and serves as a one-stop-solution to all queries. Unfortunately there is not much research into how social media has impacted anaesthesia practice and it may be due to the fact that not many educational institutes in the west are in favor of using social media for education for fear of litigation. Also many groups are 'closed' groups and not accessible to everyone unless you are a member and hence it makes research difficult about the impact they create. The feedback from our members is very positive and helped many to change the ways they practiced anaesthesia. We as a group believe in "Safe Anaesthesia, Safe Surgery, Safe Patient", meaning that safe anaesthesia ensures safe surgery and a safe patient.

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