Preserving professional identities, behaviors, and values in digital professionalism; a scoping review

Abstract

Background

Despite a rapid rise of use of social media in medical disciplines, uncertainty prevails among healthcare professionals for providing medical content on social media. There are also growing concerns about unprofessional behaviors and blurring of professional identities that are undermining digital professionalism. This review tapped the literature to determine the impact of social media on medical professionalism and how can professional identities and values be maintained in digital era.

Methods

We searched the databases of PubMed, ProQuest, ScienceDirect, Web of Science, and EBSCO host using (professionalism AND (professionalism OR (professional identity) OR (professional behaviors) OR (professional values) OR (professional ethics))) AND ((social media) AND ((social media) OR (social networking sites) OR Twitter OR facebook)) AND (health professionals). The research questions were based on participants (health professionals), concept (professionalism), and context (social media, digital world). We screened initial yield of titles using pre-determined inclusion and exclusion criteria and selected a group of articles for qualitative analysis. We used the Biblioshiny® software package for generation of popular concepts as clustered keywords.

Results

Our search yielded 44 articles with four leading themes; marked rise in use of social media by healthcare professionals and students, negative impact of social media on digital professionalism, blurring of medical professional values, behaviors, and identity in digital era, limited evidence for teaching and assessing digital professionalism. A high occurrence of violation of patient privacy and professional integrity and cyberbullying is reported. There are no existing guidelines and policies for digital professionalism that can safeguard healthcare professionals, students and patients.

Conclusion

Our scoping review reports a rapid rise of unprofessional behaviors on social media among healthcare professionals. The boundaries between personal and professional practices are mystified in digital professionalism. These findings call for potential educational ramifications to resurrect professional virtues, behaviors and identities of healthcare professionals and students.
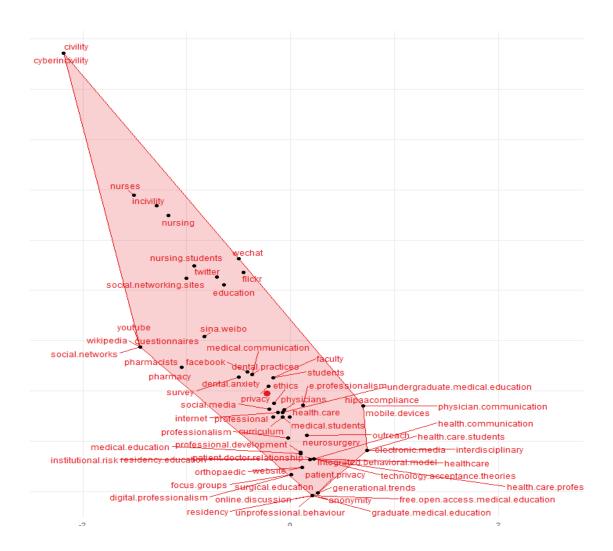
Figure: Multiple cluster analysis the bibliometric analysis illustrating the cluster and multiple correspondence of high-frequency keywords used in this scoping review.