“We need to embrace social media or risk losing our voice”

When I asked my pulmonary rehabilitation group if there was anything missing from the programme, the group, predominately women in their late 50s, suggested a talk related to social media. As a recent convert to Twitter, I thought it was a great idea. So one week later I was discussing the positives and dangers of the infamous hashtag. The session developed into a vibrant discussion, in particular about blogs. I quickly felt out of my comfort zone. I’d never heard of most of the sites the group knew about or what was going on within them, so the group took charge of the laptop and projector and enthusiastically showed each other favourite sites. Without doubt, this was the best pulmonary rehab education and provoked a discussion with the whole group on where they sourced help and information.

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Interestingly, the general consensus within the pulmonary rehabilitation group was that many COPD-related blogs they had found were written by American men for men. They found them depressing and not reflective of their voice or experience of living with COPD. This triggered my thinking; it could be something I could help with. As a result of the session, I contacted a colleague who knows about blogging. She is now working with the group to help them to set up their own individual blogs, ones for British women with a positive attitude. I can’t wait to read what this brings forth. NT

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Good carers will look after both mind and body

Having a long-term condition or being in pain increases the risk of depression, so it is not surprising that significant numbers of older people are affected. Unfortunately this is often overlooked and goes untreated, possibly because health professionals are focusing on physical care. The review on page 16 explores the relationship between ill health and depression, and describes how assessment for depression can be carried out quickly and easily by general nurses.

Continuing this theme, we highlight an excellent initiative: tea parties to reduce social isolation in older people who live alone. More frail older people will need residential care; our third themed article describes implementing training for unqualified staff. Its focus was to reduce avoidable harm and it demonstrated positive results.

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