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Reaching your Readership through the Blogosphere

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Introduction

Creating and sustaining a blog is relatively new in the world of publication. Questions such as "is this the right medium in which to attract new readers?" and "can we reach out to the readership's burgeoning need for instant information in today's information hungry environment?" are asked as editorial boards deliberate relevance of a blog on the journal web site. *The Clinical Nurse Specialist: The Journal for Advanced Nursing Practice* ventured into the world of blogging through a discussion forum about the Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN) Consensus Model: Licensure, Accreditation, Certification and Education (2008). The blog, in operation since January of 2011, has averaged approximately 500 views per month, thirty percent being international visits. Although few visitors responded to the blog, constant viewership indicated that the blog, with its factual and timely information, was of interest to a self-selected viewership.

Background

The advanced practice nursing community, educators, clinicians, regulators and accreditation bodies, came together to create a document that is intended to guide the future practice, regulation, certification and education of Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs)well into the future. The APRN Consensus Model was a landmark document that currently is providing guidance and expectations for implementation of a standardized regulatory model for all four of the advanced practice roles: Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS), Nurse Practitioner (NP), Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist (CRNA), and Certified Nurse Midwives (CNM). Consensus among 26 nursing organizations representing all aspects of APRN practice, education, licensure and professional organizations was reached regarding standardization of expectations about how best to accredit educational programs, and then educate, certify and license the APRN graduates. The intent was to have standardized expectations so that the public would understand the capabilities of the four APRN roles and state regulatory boards would recognize and protect advanced scopes of practice.

The model is now being implemented. Educators, regulators and accreditors are making changes affecting students currently enrolled in advanced practice programs and currently practicing APRNs. Many APRNs in practice at this time find themselves needing new or different credentials, such as certification or academic courses to meet requirements to be recognized for advanced practice by state regulatory bodies. The changes are coming rapidly; APRNs in practice often believe the changes are too rapid and come without warning. Although the model was agreed to in 2008, many argue that communication has been uneven and messages were often shrouded in opinions. Reaching out to the CNS readership to both inform and assist them to prepare for the changes was perceived as an essential element for the readership of the journal. Some of the changes that have been affecting CNS education and practice are: requirements for state level recognition when some had no mechanism in place to title protect CNSs; increasing pressure for CNS specific program

accreditation for schools of nursing to assure education addressed core practice competencies; certification requirements for entry to practice where previously certification was a mark of excellence; and the addition of separate courses in pathophysiology, physical assessment, and pharmacology to curricula. Due to the broad nature of these changes, the editorial board believed it was imperative to get information to journal readers as quickly as possible in a reader friendly format.

Problem

CNSs need a constant source of timely and accurate information about the implementation efforts of the APRN Consensus Model. Although there is a network communication tool, it was created to communicate about the Model to those stakeholder organizations most interested in shaping and managing changes. The APRN website and planned monthly conference calls are effective tools that keep engaged organizations informed of each other's activities consistent with the elements of the model. It is not intended, however, for the general population of APRNs. The changes are happening relatively quickly and the lag time between emerging implementation ideas and journal publication does not allow readers access to the most current information in a timely manner.

Solution

The editorial board of the *Clinical Nurse Specialist: The Journal for Advanced Nursing Practice* determined that the use of a blog would be the most efficient and agile means to get information to the readership. The feature of a blog was available through the publisher sponsored journal web site. One of the authors, an Associate Editor of the journal, had been a major contributor to the APRN Consensus Model document in its final form and was still engaged in the dialogue and website. It was determined that she would host the blog by posting updates and entertaining questions about the APRN Model and the implications of its implementation for the CNS population. The blog began with an inaugural post in January 2011 and continues to this date with postings typically on a monthly basis or more frequently if activity requires sharing of current information perceived as relevant to the readership.

Findings

Data of visits to the blog from May and June of 2012 are presented in Table 1. These data are fairly consistent across the months of the existence of the blog with one exception. When the author presented a discussion on the comparison of the APRN Consensus Model and the current events in Canada relative to APRNs there was an increase in international readership. This number returned to baseline international readership when topics returned to a focus on what is happening in the United States. The data is fairly consistent with approximately three to four hundred (300-400) visits per day to the site. The reader is staying on the site between 15 and 20 minutes with the median visit being approximately 6 minutes. Visits from international sites account for approximately 30% of all traffic on the blog site.

Readers are getting to the site through a variety of means. Data on the referring site is available in Figure 1. More than 38% of the readers go directly to the web site. There is an automatic notification feature that sends an e-mail to the readers whenever there is something new posted to the site. It is likely that these readers are using that feature and when a new posting is made available. They can go directly to the site through an e-mail link provided to their e-mail account registered with the site to read the new information. Approximately 25% of the readers find the site through Google or Google Scholar when they search for information on the APRN Consensus Model. Approximately 9% find the site when looking at the journal web page. Finally, approximately 27% of the readership find

the site through other undetermined means.

Anecdotal findings are interesting as well. The readers rarely ask questions of the blog author. The author specifically poses intriguing questions and requests the thoughts of the readers in order to elicit further content or topics for the blog. Very few of the readers respond. Reasons for this are unclear. The author was approached at a national convention by many of the readers with comments of thanks for the information. When asked why the readers did not respond on the blog they consistently answered that they felt they had nothing to contribute that would be of any value to the other readers. Although this is considered an informal and informational discussion about topics of national relevance the readers are somewhat intimidated by the process of "publishing" their comments on the blog.

Implications for the Editor and Editorial Board

This adventure into the world of blogging has yielded data that the content is relevant to the readership as they return repeatedly to the site, there is a readership that finds the content through search engines such as Google, but there is little interaction with the readers in spite of it being a very accessible format. Implications for a journal editorial board considering using a blog include: 1) select topics suitable for a blog, ideally topics where information changes rapidly and readers need timely updates, 2) determine expectations and responsibilities of blog author, 3) identify qualified individuals for providing technical support, and 4) evaluate the overall usefulness of a blog for journal readers.

Conclusions

The blog is a venue for pushing out information, but also presents the potential for interaction through engaged discussion, in this example, discussion about the APRN Consensus Model for CNS practice and education. Initially the purpose of the blog was to draw the readership in to a discussion and probe unintended consequences Model for CNSs. Data suggest high readership but very little interaction, brining into question the usefulness of the blog option for dialogue. It is clear, however, from the sustained readership that there is something that the blog is providing to the participants. It is the conclusion of the editorial board that the blog did meet the needs of the readers for immediate information about the Model; however, it was difficult to judge the reasons for the lack of interactive dialogue.

References

APRN Consensus Work Group and the National Council of State Boards of Nursing APRN Advisory Committee (2008) *Consensus Model for APRN Regulation: Licensure, Accreditation, Certification and Education* Retrieved from: **https://www.ncsbn.org/Consensus_Model_for_APRN_Regulation_July_2008.pdf** September 3, 2012.

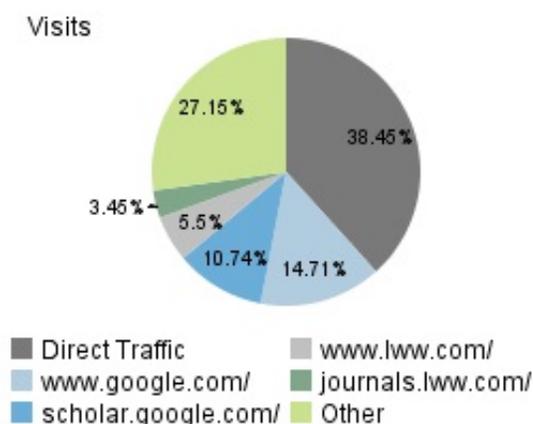Table 1. Summary of Visits to the Blog May through June 2012

	5/1/12 -5/31/12	6/1/12 - 6/31/12	% Change
Visits	11,518	11,563	0.39%
Average per Day	371	385	3.77%

Average Visit Duration	00:22:36	00:16:49	-25.59%
Median Visit Duration	00:06:31	00:06:05	-6.65%
International Visits	36.41%	29.59%	-18.73%
Visits of Unknown Origin	4.68%	7.86%	67.95%
Visits from Your Country: United States (US)	58.91%	62.54%	6.16%

Data taken from WebTrends software data report regarding APRN Consensus Model blog.

Figure 1. Referring Site for Readership

Referring Site

Data taken from WebTrends software data report regarding the APRN Consensus Model blog.

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