



UNIVERSITY  
OF WOLLONGONG  
AUSTRALIA

University of Wollongong  
**Research Online**

---

Faculty of Health and Behavioural Sciences - Papers  
(Archive)

Faculty of Science, Medicine and Health

---

2012

# Growing use of social media: How can dietitians embrace this trend?

Qingcai Peng  
*University Of Wollongong*

Yasmine Probst  
*University of Wollongong, [yasmine@uow.edu.au](mailto:yasmine@uow.edu.au)*

---

## Publication Details

Peng, Q. & Probst, Y. 2012, 'Growing use of social media: How can dietitians embrace this trend?', *Nutrition and Dietetics*, vol. 69, no. 1, p. 133.

Research Online is the open access institutional repository for the University of Wollongong. For further information contact the UOW Library:  
[research-pubs@uow.edu.au](mailto:research-pubs@uow.edu.au)

---

# Growing use of social media: How can dietitians embrace this trend?

**Keywords**

trend, this, media, embrace, dietitians, can, social, growing

**Disciplines**

Arts and Humanities | Life Sciences | Medicine and Health Sciences | Social and Behavioral Sciences

**Publication Details**

Peng, Q. & Probst, Y. 2012, 'Growing use of social media: How can dietitians embrace this trend?', *Nutrition and Dietetics*, vol. 69, no. 1, p. 133.

## **Growing use of social media: how can dietitians embrace this trend?**

**Qingcai Peng<sup>1</sup>**, Yasmine Probst<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *School of Health Science, University of Wollongong, Australia*

<sup>2</sup> *Smart Food Centre, University of Wollongong, Australia*

Social media, a growing global phenomenon, has transformed the interaction between healthcare professionals and consumers and the perceived value of dietitians. The aim of the present study was to investigate the dietetic use of social media. A cross-sectional online survey was conducted among the members of Dietitians Association of Australians (DAA). In addition, a pilot test of social media metric analysis tools NodeXL and TweetStat was conducted among subsamples of dietitian Twitter and Facebook users. The result showed that 38.7% of a total of n=340 participants used social media in a professional capacity. Social networking sites were used most widely (n=282) and micro-blogging sites used most regularly. The most recognised benefit was reported to be communicating internationally and remotely, while the least was for the delivery of health care. Participants were also found to demonstrate a degree of awareness of online professionalism. In terms of barriers to use, time restraint (18.6%) and ‘I don’t know where to start’ (18.6%) were common. The pilot test of the TweetStats showed the characteristics of top users one replies to/retweets. The NodeXL demonstrated connections between users in a network and measures each user’s influence—degree and centrality. In conclusion, the survey shows a low level of engagement in social media in a professional capacity among Australian dietitians. However, it also demonstrates the prospects for improvement. The pilot test found a number of limitations in both of TweetStats and NodeXL analyses, suggesting future research is warranted in developing credible social media metric analysis tools.

Contact email – [qp558@uowmail.edu.au](mailto:qp558@uowmail.edu.au)