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MEDIA RELEASE

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Expert urges health community to join the social media revolution

Social media has unparalleled potential to improve patients' health and the healthcare community needs to harness its power, according to a US social media expert visiting Australia this week.

Lee Aase, Director of the Mayo Clinic Center for Social Media, says patients will be engaged in social media even if health professionals are not – and failing to embrace the trend means foregoing an unprecedented opportunity for achieving health benefits.

“Choosing not to be involved leaves the field to those who may not have the patients' interests at heart,” Mr Aase said.

“The social media revolution is the most far-reaching communications development since the printing press – every organisation is now a media organisation and every communications initiative should have a social media component.”

Mr Aase is in Australia as a guest of HARC – the Hospital Alliance for Research Collaboration – and will address a HARC forum in Sydney this evening.

HARC is a collaboration of the Sax Institute, Clinical Excellence Commission and the Agency for Clinical Innovation. It drives innovative thinking about emerging challenges in healthcare and links researchers, health managers, clinicians and policy makers so they can share ideas.

The Mayo Clinic Center for Social Media was launched last year and already has more than 200,000 Twitter followers, 55,000 Facebook connections and is the most popular medical provider channel on YouTube, attracting 5000 visitors a week.

Mayo has pioneered hospital blogging and has used social media to implement public health campaigns and provide in-depth patient information. The Center aims to lead the social media revolution in healthcare, contributing to health literacy, healthcare delivery and population health worldwide.

Media contact: Kellie Bisset T: 02 9514 5975 M: 0434 614 578



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