
CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

#IrishMed; let's talk, and break down the barriers

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A tweetchat is a live Twitter event, moderated and focused around a specific topic. To filter all the chatter on Twitter into a single conversation, a hashtag e.g #IrishMed, is used. A moderator or host sets the agenda and leads the discussion.

#IrishMed <https://irishmed.wordpress.com/> is a live twitter-driven event which takes place every Wednesday at 10 pm Irish time, 5 pm ET, lasting for one hour, on all things relating to medicine. Tweets are welcome from everyone, healthcare professionals (HCPs), patients, carers, advocates, general public; all perspectives are valuable, as #IrishMed is non-hierarchical, and a core objective is to break down the artificial barriers between HCP and patients; after all every HCP will be a patient one day. And the dialogue goes both ways; HCPs learn about patient frustrations, patients can more appreciate the difficulties and limitations of medical care.

Founded over 2 years ago and curated by Dr Liam Farrell (@drifarrell) #IrishMed has grown into a global network with regular participants from Europe, North America, Africa + Asia.

Connecting with people and making friends from all across the globe has been a wonderful experience, all generous with their time and their wisdom, all trying to make the world a better place, as health issues are global. We usually have over 100 participants, and trend both in Ireland and in worldwide healthchats.

The topics are wide-ranging and the opinions diverse, and the format enables and encourages engagement around a number of strategic issues, such as research, ehealth, integrated care, expert patients, management of rare diseases etc. Each discussion is facilitated by an expert co-host. To demonstrate the complexity and the outreach of the interactions, this is a transcript and the analytics of a recent chat on "Integrated care;" in which there were 227 participants, 2,216 tweets, and 6,394,372 impressions; <https://irishmed.wordpress.com/2016/10/02/integrated-care/>

SoMe is soft power; words are cheap, and as we screen-writers say, "action reveals character." but you never know when a message will have an effect, and someone, somewhere will be helped because of it. Twitter is the perfect platform for this kind of interactive and participative forum, easily accessible to everyone and enabling rapid exchange of ideas. At it's best, as with #IrishMed, the concise format demands careful thought; as Samuel Johnson said, "I'm too busy to be brief."

Farrell; #IrishMed; let's talk, and break down the barriers

Keywords: network; global; participation; communication; exchange
