

*Health care should be the leader in micro-sharing.
Why isn't it?*

140

Health Care Uses for Twitter:

Suggestions for Micro-sharing In the 21st Century

by Phil Baumann, RN BSN
[@PhilBaumann](https://twitter.com/PhilBaumann)

Why Should Health Care Micro-share?

[This ebook is a repurposing of an original blog post [140 Health Care Uses for Twitter](#) published January 16, 2008.]

[Twitter](#) may either be the greatest time-wasting prank ever played on the internet community or it may be the best thing since sliced bread. It's easy to make the first case if you read the public timeline for a few minutes. It's a bit harder to make the second, but I'll do my best to make it. Specifically, I'd like to take a stab at offering 140 health care uses for Twitter.

Twitter's simplicity of design, speed of delivery and ability to connect two or more people around the world provides a powerful means of communication, idea-sharing and collaboration. There's potency in the ability to burst out 140 characters, including a shortened URI. Could this power have any use in healthcare? After all, for example, doctors and nurses share medical information, often short bursts of data (lab values, conditions, orders, etc.).

Unlike most other kinds of uses (daily exchanges between friends, the kind of work [@Comcastcares](#) does, etc.), health care related matters pose unique challenges, including but not limited to:

- Patient dignity and privacy
- Professional oaths to do no harm
- Litigation concerns
- Standards and compliance needs
- [HIPAA](#)

The possibilities that I believe Twitter offers currently far exceeds the constraints. This ebook won't offer work-around solutions to these constraints. Rather it will focus on the possibilities because once we see the potential, we may have stronger motivations to deal intelligently with the constraints. So when reading this list, don't get hung up on the details, the fears, the anxieties that may be provoked by the realities of health care as it is practiced today. **It's the 21st Century: let's be imaginative, determined and innovative. Let's be remarkable.**

In the health care industry there is often a fine line between caution and fear. It is the fear of change so common in health care that I hope we can overcome. Twitter may be a proving ground of how we overcome our fears, satisfy our cautions and extend the reach of our health care system with web-based technologies and communities.

What follows are uses that can be adopted now as well as uses that remain to be developed. The suggested uses won't necessarily find their application via Twitter itself, but Twitter exemplifies the potential of micro-sharing. The suggestions form an argument for challenging ourselves to think past a status quo which is failing.

What do you think health care will look like in 2099? Will we still be using paper for medical records or will we be using technologies that everybody else will be using? Will we transcend our accustomed ways of thinking and re-socialize ourselves for how we interact with each other? That's what is required in the coming age of micro-sharing. I hope that this list helps to answer those questions.

If you want to learn more about Twitter, please refer to the Twitter Resources section at the end of this ebook.

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Who Is This List For?

You!

You, the CNO of a community hospital who wants to better monitor your facility
You, the CEO of a hospital who wants to know what's being said about you and what you can do about it

You, the nurse who is tired of chasing after information that should be at your fingertips

You, the doctor who wants to network with peers and periscope for the latest advances in medicine

You, the disaster response personnel who need to recruit resources real-time

You, the epidemiologist who wants to track infectious diseases and develop a sleek alert system

You, health policy official who wants to interact with the public

You, the patient who wants to connect others with similar conditions

You, the family member who wants community support

You, the citizen who wants a voice that's heard

You, who don't fall into any of the above categories...yet

140 Health Care Uses for Twitter

1. Tissue recruitment (kidney and other organ, blood)
2. [Epidemiological](#) survey
3. Disaster alerting and response
4. Emergency response team management
5. Supportive care for patients and family members
6. Diabetes management ([blood glucose tracking](#))
7. Maintaining a personal health diary
8. Adverse event reporting in the clinical setting and other pharmacovigilance functions
9. Emitting critical laboratory values to nurses and physicians

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10. Alarming silent codes (psychiatric emergencies, security incidents)
 11. Drug safety alerts from the FDA
 12. Risk management communication
 13. Augmenting telemedicine
 14. Issuing [Amber alerts](#)
 15. Issuing alerts for missing nursing home residents
 16. Exercise management and encouragement
 17. Weight management and support
 18. Biomedical device data capture and reporting
 19. Nutritional diary and tracking

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20. Coordinating preoperative, perioperative and postoperative care (among pharmacy, nursing and surgical services)
 21. Medical service collaboration in the clinical setting
 22. Triage management in emergency rooms
 23. Census management/monitoring
 24. Arranging outpatient care
 25. Crowdsourcing for health care resources
 26. Shift-bidding for nurses and other health care professionals
 27. Mood tracking (for patients with bipolar and other mood disorders)
 28. Patient care reminders in the clinical setting.
 29. Prescription management, including pharmacy refill reminders
 30. Daily health tips from authoritative sources

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31. Location awareness during crisis
 32. Occupational safety response
 33. Hazardous materials communication
 34. "Quick and dirty" diagnostic brainstorming between physicians (e.g. 'symptom clustering')
 35. Clinical case education (residents following attendings).
 36. Physician opinion-sharing
 37. Promoting Domestic Violence awareness
 38. Raising Child Abuse awareness
 39. [USMLE](#) preparation for medical licensing
 40. NCLEX for preparation for nursing licensing

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41. Recruitment of health care staff
 42. Alcohol and other substance abuse support
 43. Issuing and confirming doctor's orders
 44. Environmental alerts: pollen counts, pollution levels, heat waves, severe weather alerts
 45. Remote wound care assistance
 46. Rural area health care communication
 47. Micro-sharing of pertinent patient information
 48. Micro-sharing of diagnostic results (blood tests, echocardiography, radiological images)
 49. Internal facility customer service (a hospital equivalent of [@Comcastcares](#) - c'mon hospitals!)
 50. Publishing health-related news

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51. Psychiatric "check-ins" for patients
 52. Nursing mentoring and collaboration
 53. Publishing disease-specific tips
 54. Childcare support
 55. Fund raising for hospitals and health-related causes
 56. Updating patient family members during procedures
 57. [Live-tweeting surgical](#) procedures for education
 58. Rare diseases tracking and resource connection
 59. Reporting hospital staff injuries
 60. Tracking patient trends
 61. Tracking disease-specific trends

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62. Checking hospital ratings with other health care consumers
 63. Providing around-the-clock disease management
 64. Connecting genetic researchers with physicians
 65. Publishing the latest advances in biomedical devices
 66. Tracking antibiotic resistance
 67. Real-time satisfaction surveys with immediate follow-up for problem resolution.
 68. Issuing asthma alerts
 69. Data collection for tracking facility patterns (process-performance, supply-chain and staffing problems)
 70. Live-tweeting medical conferences
 71. Keyword-tracking of health-related topics via Search.Twitter

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72. Posting quick nursing assessments that feed into electronic medical records (EMRs)
 73. Improving medical rounding systems
 74. Clinical trial awareness
 75. Hospital administration
 76. Sharing peer-to-peer reviews of articles of interest
 77. Connecting patients with similar disease processes
 78. Enhancing health-related support groups (e.g. buddy-systems for depression)
 79. Providing [smoking cessation](#) assistance
 80. Medical appliance support (e.g. at home: colostomy care, infusion pumps, wound-vacs)
 81. Reporting medical device malfunctions

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82. Tweeting updates to facility policies and procedures
 83. Arranging appointments with health care providers
 84. Product safety alerts
 85. Food safety alerts
 86. Information on [women's health](#)
 87. Pain management
 88. Hospital reputation monitoring
 89. Publishing hospital-sponsored events in local communities
 90. Community health outreach
 91. Bioterrorism awareness and preparedness
 92. Issuing updates to hospital services to the public

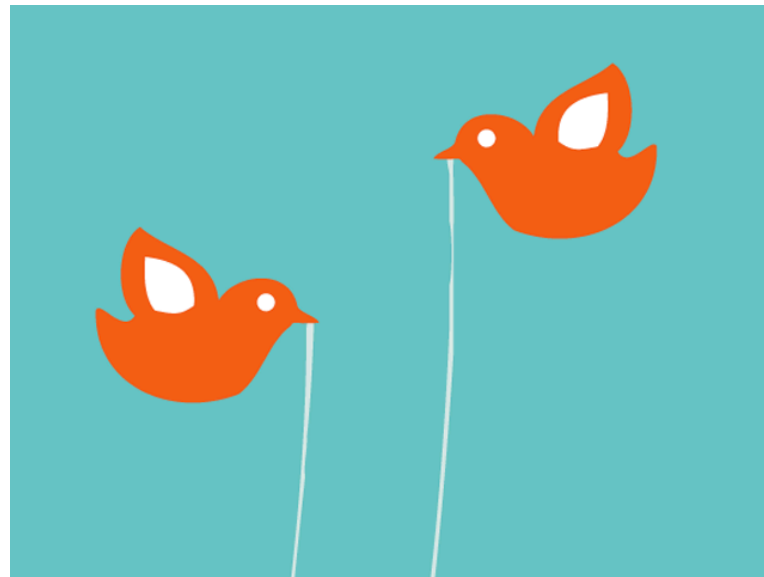
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93. Insurance claim management
 94. Ethical, permission-based following of patients
 95. Micro-sharing consent for surgical and other procedures
 96. Patient-sharing of health-related experiences
 97. Posting 'bread crumbs' of facility experiences ("I had a bypass at this hospital and it went well but the food almost killed me.")
 98. Patient searches for others confronting similar problems
 99. Stress management
 100. Mental health awareness
 101. Posting homeless shelter needs
 102. Food bank resource management

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103. Transmitting patient data to patients who are traveling abroad
 104. Generating streams of authoritative health care content online
 105. Exposing medical quakery
 106. Micro-sharing documentation for advanced medical directives
 107. Discussing public health care policy
 108. Developing stronger patient-provider relationships
 109. Tracking the safety and efficacy of pharmaceuticals
 110. Following health marketing
 111. Tracking [influenza alerts](#) from the CDC
 112. Exchanging/soliciting scientific validation of alternative health claims
 113. Following ad-hoc conferences on eHealth like [HealthCampPhila](#)

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- 114. Tracking toxic diseases
 - 115. Tracking [HIV news](#)
 - 116. Issuing/exchanging dietary tips
 - 117. [Tweeting](#) what you eat
 - 118. Comparing nursing home performance
 - 119. Coordinating clinical instruction
 - 120. Communicating with nursing supervisors.
 - 121. Public safety announcements
 - 122. Tracking FDA guideline updates
 - 123. Tracking the progress of developing pharmaceuticals
 - 124. Broadcasting infant care tips to new parents

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- 125. Publishing vaccination/immunization services locations, hours and reminders
 - 126. Reporting adverse events to FDA
 - 127. Obtaining information on Medicare and Medicaid
 - 128. Case management functions
 - 129. Clinical education coordination
 - 130. Facilitating patient-transfer processes
 - 131. Patient-information retrieval
 - 132. Reporting breeches of universal precautions in health care facilities
 - 133. Posting daily nursing tips
 - 134. Exchanging physician humor (we don't want stressed-out docs)
 - 135. Closing the digital divide with respect to health care information

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- 136.** Coordinating allied health care services during patient admissions
 - 137.** Coordinating patient discharges with all services
 - 138.** Post-discharge patient consultations
 - 139.** Helping device technicians communicate directly with manufacturers
 - 140.** Discussing HIPAA reform in the age of micro-sharing



Why Can't Health Care Be A Leader In Micro-sharing?

There they are: 140 health care uses for micro-sharing platforms like Twitter. Many of these are stretches, but plasticity of vision is a key feature of innovation.

Implementing these uses can be enormously challenging (and even impossible) on Twitter given today's constraints. For many of these uses, other **more robust and secure** micro-sharing platforms will be needed (e.g. [Yammer](#) or [ESME](#)). Certainly, Twitter offers a model of how micro-sharing can be used for a wide range of purposes. If [social media marketers](#) can figure out how to use Twitter, health care professionals can also figure out how to fully exploit micro-sharing.

With 26 letters in the alphabet arranged within 140 characters, there are over **1.2 x 10¹⁹⁸** possible character combinations. Of course, the number of meaningful sentences is far less than that but a point stands out: *there's a virtually infinite number of short pulses of (meaningful) information that Twitter can facilitate.*

With that kind of power, **health care should be a leader in micro-sharing**, not a lagger.

Closing Notes

When compiling this list, I swam out to the far end of this century and looked back upon the wreckage into which our health care system is heading. Pardon me if the ideas are far-fetched: I fetched them from far away.

I realize that I don't explain the applications in detail here. I want the health care community to work through these applications (what, you want me to solve *all* the problems in one ebook?) There's always time for [discussion](#).

I use Twitter as a metaphorical model for what we can do with data exchange. There are entirely new technologies and communities that will need to be developed for the visions here to bear fruit. Once you play around with Twitter, you'll come to see its promises and limitations and then you can come up with your own uses for novel kinds of micro-sharing.

The health care industry has achieved remarkable milestones in the advancement of knowledge about ourselves. It should be at the forefront of innovative uses of technology, no matter how impossible or absurd the challenge appears to our accustomed eyes.

Twitter Resources

If you have never heard of Twitter or have heard of it but would like to get a start, here is a list of suggested resources for Twitter:

- Common Craft's [Twitter in Plain English](#)
- [TwiTip](#) – Darren Rowse's blog on Twitter tips
- [Your Guide to Microblogging and Twitter](#)
- Chris Brogan's [50 Ideas on Using Twitter for Business](#)
- Laura Fitton's [Pistachio Consulting](#)

There's no shortage of talk about [Twitter](#). Google around. Sign up, start following people, plunge into the experience, make mistakes and learn to use Twitter. Once you get used to its nuances, you'll then be able to see how micro-sharing can, and must, play a role in health care.

About The Author

My name is Phil Baumann and I'm many things, including a registered nurse. You can [lead me on Twitter](#) if you think I can help your cause. You can also stop by [PhilBaumann.com](#) for a bit more info. For extended conversation, email Phil@PhilBaumann.com. **(And if you're entrepreneurial, let's talk!)**

BUT this ebook isn't about me. It's about **you**.

You can author a much better ebook about how to use micro-sharing and other web-based media in health care. Give it your best. Imagine if 1,000 of us wrote letters from the future.

You are the author of the 21st Century.

You are the author of our health care policies.

Author a remarkable story about health care in the 21st Century. It's your turn.