Abstract: 2012 American College of Healthcare Executives (ACHE) Poster Session

**Title:** Using Social Media to Improve Service and Health in the Air Force Medical Service (AFMS)

**Objectives:** The AFMS mission is to provide “Trusted Care Anywhere,” serving two-million beneficiaries at 75 Military Treatment Facilities (MTFs). The challenge is communicating with diverse and dispersed audiences: patients, families, beneficiaries, staffs, and stakeholders. The objectives: 1) Develop a strategy to improve service and health through engagement, 2) Establish Facebook accounts at 75 MTFs to improve patient activation, and 3) Deliver guidance, training, and content for sustainability.

**Planning and Research Methods:** Qualitative research in the form of trends, best practices, focus groups, and interviews provided the foundation for the strategy. Early adopters provided a learning laboratory for ideas, concerns, and lessons learned. These efforts resulted in policies, tools, training needs, and metrics. Quantitative analysis using Facebook Insights, Website trafficking, and categorization of concerns provided information to develop and implement plans, make adjustments, and track progress.

**Implementation Methods:** A Strategic Communication Work Group (SCWG) developed a social media strategy to align initiatives with communication plans, developing marketing plans for MTF use, and integrating media from the Center of Excellence for Medical Multimedia (e.g. AFMSCEMMTube.com). Due to popularity, low cost, and ease of use, implementation began with Facebook. Facebook Insights (metrics), feedback from MTFs, and page-level development incentives: Basic, Advanced, and Awesome levels were applied as a system-wide implementation strategy. Teams conducted training (90 min) and executive level seminars (3 hours). A master content calendar aligned major health themes. A Playbook includes 40 ready to use materials (e.g. 200+ Facebook Posts content on Quality/Patient Safety, Suicide Prevention, Patient Centered Medical Home, customer service, diabetes, cancer prevention, asthma, pain management, dental health, and heart health). A variety of self-help materials on topics such as @ tagging, Facebook Insights, Twitter, Facebook groups, custom tabs, crisis communications, SlideShare, campaign plan and content development guides, and engagement tactics are available. The SCWG reviews trends in quarterly metrics, manages a Social Media Work Group, and sponsors training.

**Results:** By December 2011 and 3 national awards later, the strategy was paying off. The AFMS successfully communicated with diverse and dispersed audiences. Metrics show the audience is extremely receptive, has a desire to engage in their health, and continues to grow. The AFMS has grown from 1,909 Fans in mid-June to 4,260 Fans as of January—a 121 percent increase. Collectively, the AFMS has acquired over 20,000 fans. A total of 557 Facebook posts have been shared with more than 1.5 million views since the launch of the Page – engaging the audience on improving service and health. Training and resources provided MTF staffs an understanding of the possibilities including many myths vs. facts on use of the social media. To date, 600+ Airmen have been trained. Eighty-one percent (61/75) of AFMS MTFs use Facebook: 86 percent use at the Basic; 7 percent at the Advanced; and 7 percent are at the Awesome levels. The content improved health literacy and provided feedback on customer service. Thirty-eight percent of posted content focused on information to improve service and health. Notable MTF-level Facebook success examples include a record number of people received flu shots as a result of posting information via Facebook, increased ability to communicate with patients and airmen during the 2011 earthquake in Japan, increase patient support via a Facebook Diabetes support group, saving time across MTFs by responding to Fans questions via Facebook, and posting materials that address FAQs. The AFMS has initiated development of creating virtual medical neighborhoods to share relevant information via groups such as Global Health Engagement (International Health Specialist), Health & Wellness Centers, and Dental, Medical, Nursing, Medical Service Corps, Occupational Therapy, and Physical Therapy professional groups. Senior leaders have developed discussion forums. The ability to replicate this initiative is easy with the well-organized Playbook with 400+ documents on marketing plan development, blogging, and social media policy and implementation plans. These innovations will improve patients’ quality and access to care, increase satisfaction of patients and staff, and improve population health by empowering patients to take an active role in their health and healthcare.