What’s trending in infection control?

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Background

Peer-reviewed journals are a critical part of disseminating important scientific findings in a scholarly format. However, there are other ways healthcare professionals and the public obtain information. These include newspapers, news websites, blogs and social media. With such a variety of platforms to obtain, share, and communicate infection prevention and control information, it is important to understand what the current publication trends are and how these interact.

Methods

For articles published in 2015, we undertook a scoping review of popular news websites, newspapers and blogs in the US, UK and Australia AND a systematic review of infection prevention and control journals. For news website and newspapers, a range of search terms, such as “hospital infection” were used. We examined the word frequency in article titles and how often media articles referred to scholarly literature.

Results

We identified:

- 116 news website articles, 71 newspaper articles
- 214 publications on infection control websites
- 57% of articles published on news websites made no reference to a specific study or piece of research
- The terms ‘superbug’ and ‘antibiotics’ were most commonly used in the titles of news websites and newspapers, and the terms ‘infection’ and ‘prevention’ were mostly commonly used on infection control websites or blogs.

Discussion

- We identified a discrepancy between words commonly used in the titles of articles in the media (newspapers and news websites) as compared with those used in scholarly literature.
- There were similarities in the most commonly used words in the titles of infection control journals. Articles in the AJIC used the word ‘care’ frequently, while in ICHE ‘patients’ was prominent.
- Emotive terms such as ‘superbug’ were not commonly used in blogs, but more commonly used in newspapers and news websites.
- Blogs and the infection-control websites we reviewed appeared to bridge the gap between these two divides.
- Further research is required to understand how blogs and other platforms can be used to successfully transfer infection prevention and control knowledge, potentially bridging a gap between mainstream media and scholarly work.

Table 1. Publications included in the scoping review

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Publication type</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Publication included in review</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>The Sun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>Daily Mirror</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>The Wall Street Journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>The New York Times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Herald Sun</td>
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<tr>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Daily Telegraph</td>
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<td>News website</td>
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<td>MultiOnline</td>
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<td>Yahoo! News Network</td>
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<td>CNN Network</td>
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<tr>
<td>News website</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Sydney Morning Herald</td>
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<tr>
<td>News website</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>News.com</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website</td>
<td>Produced In the United States, worldwide topic/contributors.</td>
<td>Infection Control Today</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website</td>
<td>Contributors mainly authors from Europe</td>
<td>Reflections in Infection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website</td>
<td>Contributors mainly authors from the United States.</td>
<td>Prevention and Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website</td>
<td></td>
<td>Infection Prevention</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Note: ICHE = Infection Control and Hospital Epidemiology; AJIC = American Journal of Infection Control; JHI = Journal of Hospital Infection; HI = Healthcare Infection. Healthcare Infection is now called Infection, Disease and Health.