

# Learning, sharing and teaching about nutrition with social media

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## INTRODUCTION

- Globally, social media use has reached 2.8 billion users; however, there has been little scientific exploration into how people are using it to communicate about nutrition.
- There has been growing concern about the use of social media to promote non-evidence based trends.

## STUDY AIM

- To explore how people enrolled in a MOOC report using social media to learn and communicate about nutrition.

## METHODS

- An exploratory, inductive, qualitative approach was employed.
- A free 3-week online course “Food as Medicine” was run by the Department of Nutrition, Dietetics and Food at Monash University; the course was hosted by FutureLearn. <https://www.futurelearn.com/course/s/food-as-medicine>
- Learners (people who enrolled in the course) posted on a forum either in response to a question posed by the educators or mentors, or to communicate with their fellow learners.
- Forum posts that mentioned “social media” or related terms were analysed for themes.

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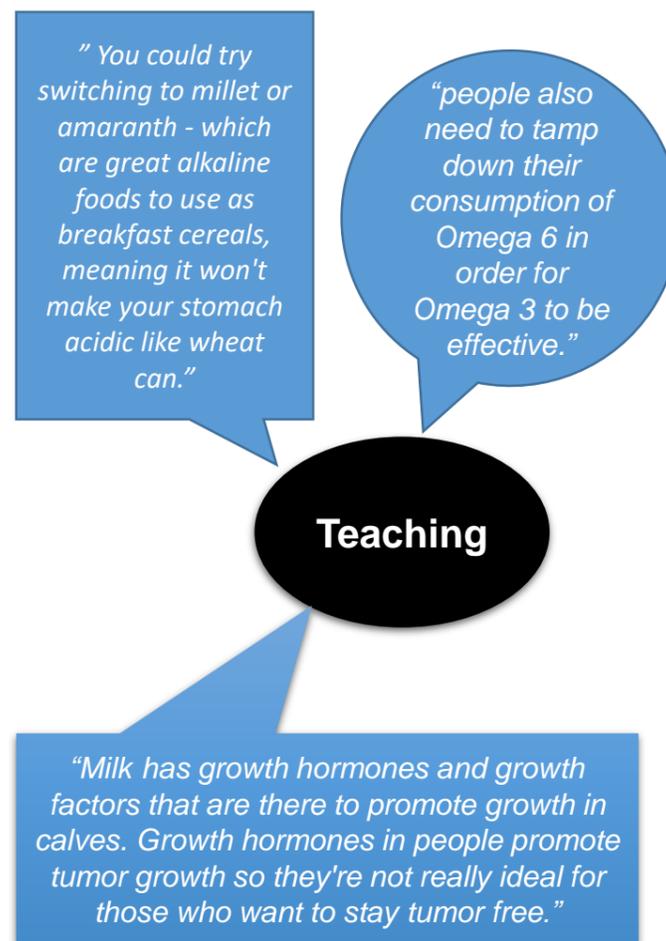


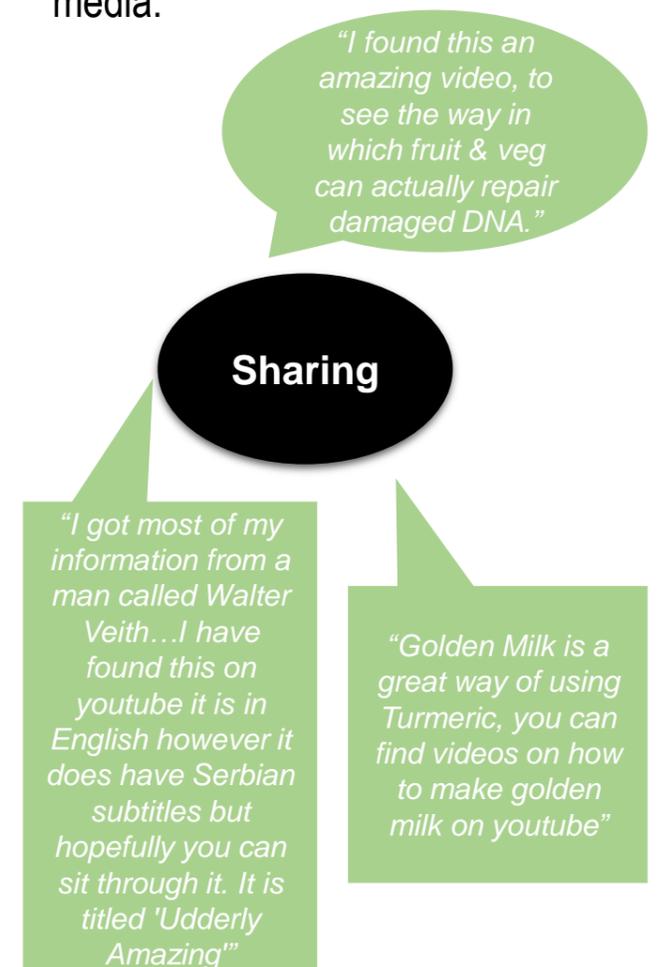
Figure 1 ▲: Quotes relating to the theme 'Teaching' from the MOOC

Figure 2 ►: Quotes relating to the theme 'Sharing' from the MOOC

## RESULTS

- 26,120 active learners participated in “Food as Medicine” in May 2016. 9093 learners posted between 1 and 1312 times (median 13) in the forums.
- Themes found included: teaching, sharing, commentary about social media in society, inspiration they got from social media, personal experience or anecdotes relating to social media and using social media to communicate and connect with other learners.
- Two major themes that emerged were: 1) Teaching and 2) Sharing.

- 1) Teaching: where learners advocated for their beliefs and reference to external social media was used to support this advocacy, often citing perceived experts or trusted experts/sources of information.
- Statements were often preceded by “I think” or “I believe”, but could also be presented factually.
- 2) Sharing: where learners shared health information they found “worth watching” or “interesting” on social media.



## CONCLUSION

- These analyses suggest that learners in an online nutrition course are using social media to learn (seeking information on social media), teach (advocating about what they have learned and/or reinforcing their beliefs) and share (with other learners and with their friends/followers on other platforms) about nutrition.

