How medical students can be effective advocates on social media

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As the future of medicine, medical students can have a powerful voice. Social media offers a forum for them to amplify it.

A recent session at the 2021 AMA Medical Student Advocacy Conference gave some direction on how students can make their voice heard on social channels. Here are some key takeaways offered by presenter Victoria Gordon, AMA medical student digital fellow and a third-year medical student at Kansas City University of Medicine and Biosciences.

Know your target audience

For virtual conference attendees, the Medical Student Advocacy Conference offered a chance to interact with their elected officials—although those interactions were digital in 2021 due to the pandemic. These interactions may carry greater weight if you post them on social media, Gordon said. Other tips she offered included tagging your elected officials and using clear visuals. Also, she said, it helps to be yourself and bring your own personality to social media posts.

"Stay authentic," Gordon said. "We all have our own voice on social media. People love to see that."

Check out this great advice on how to get involved in advocacy as a medical student.

Find power in numbers

For an event such as the Medical Student Advocacy Conference, Gordon hammered home the power of hashtags such as #MedStudentsAdvocate. She also asserted that it was important for students to
connect with their colleagues and tag them in social media posts, which should include varied visuals such as still images, videos and boomerangs.

Follow these tips to effectively lobby lawmakers as a medical student.

**Maintain balance**

If you are looking to get traction across the aisle in advocacy-related social posts, Gordon recommends that you tag both major political parties in your posts. She also recommends linking to a resource with more information about the topic for which you are advocating.

That resource could come from the AMA, which offered medical students issue briefs on topics such as medical marijuana research, maternal health and mortality and telehealth expansion, in advance of the Medical Student Advocacy Conference.

**Take advantage of Zoom**

With much of interaction these days relegated to online conferencing platforms such as Zoom, Gordon offered a few pointers on how to make your Zoom advocacy efforts translate into effective social media posts.

Her tips included using a branded background, or at least, using a background that isn’t distracting. She also noted the importance of ensuring that your social media display name is in a professional format with full first and last names, followed by "MD student" or "DO student," as appropriate.

Gordon’s talk was one of many at the conference that helped give medical students in attendance the tools to advocate on crucial health care issues. In addition to social media, sessions covered topics such as health equity and public health infrastructure.