

Heart Rhythm Society Communications Committee update



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The Communications Committee is 1 of 30 Committees, Subcommittees, and Councils within the Heart Rhythm Society (HRS). The Communications Committee charge, available at HRSONline.org, tasks the committee with providing "...strategic direction, policy oversight, and business decision support for all Society communications efforts." Although this charge is broad, practically speaking, the efforts of the committee focus on providing strategic direction for the society's print and digital communications as well as HRS's digital publications, such as *Keeping Pace*. In recent years, much of our committee's effort has centered on the use of social media to provide electrophysiology science communication, to facilitate communication with society members, and to build the HRS brand online. Both the Heart Rhythm TV Subcommittee and the Journal Subcommittee fall under the purview of the Communications Committee, serving as natural extensions of the overall committee charge.

A major area of focus for our committee has been efforts to increase awareness among HRS membership about how the society operates and what it does on behalf of its members. For many HRS members, the annual Heart Rhythm

meeting and *Heart Rhythm Journal* are the most visible aspects of the society. Beyond these activities, much of the membership may wonder, "What does HRS do for me?" The day-to-day activities of the society have not always been well-communicated, in part because communication has tended to focus on scientific content and less on matters of society governance or operation. To address this gap, the Communications Committee has steered the development of *Inside HRS*, the HRS President's monthly update to membership. The primary goal of *Inside HRS* is to improve transparency and communicate more directly with membership on topics such as governance, operations of the Board of Trustees, budgeting and finance, and overall strategic direction. Since the inception of *Inside HRS* in October 2020, the monthly updates have resulted in nearly 140,000 engagements with HRS members. Heart Rhythm TV, the society's YouTube channel, has provided another venue for the society to communicate directly with membership. Here, video programming not only provides coverage of science from the society's annual Heart Rhythm meeting as well as a wide variety of electrophysiology education but also keeps members abreast of "breaking news" affecting cardiac electrophysiology. This YouTube channel has been particularly valuable over the past year as the society has sought to keep membership up-to-date on its efforts to combat Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services cuts to ablation service reimbursement. Heart Rhythm TV

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provides an opportunity to communicate information more quickly than do traditional print formats and with more depth than often feasible on social media platforms.

Other examples of work done by the Communications Committee over the last couple of years include efforts to expand the reach of HRS education through online and social media platforms, in particular Twitter, an online microblogging platform. Our committee organized a group of 10 society members, known as the *Pace Setters*, to serve as social media ambassadors during the annual Heart Rhythm meeting. During HRS 2022, the *Pace Setters* posted more than 350 tweets/retweets. This online activity substantially increases the reach of the meeting, facilitates rapid dissemination of novel scientific content presented at the meeting, and allows those who are interested, but may not be able to attend in person, to engage with the annual meeting through social media. A similar group of social media ambassadors, known as the *Xplorers*, were more recently organized to post content from the society's inaugural cardiovascular digital health conference, HRX, to LinkedIn and Twitter. In part, the use of online and social media tools to expand the reach of HRS conferences, to increase engagement with members, and to provide education for electrophysiology professionals in general was driven by coronavirus disease–related restrictions on physical engagement. We reviewed the expansion of these novel educational formats in our white paper titled “Virtual transformation and the use of social media: cardiac electrophysiology education in the post-COVID-19 era.”¹ Even as pandemic-related restrictions relax, we anticipate that engagement online will continue to be a major focus for our committee.

In addition to promoting HRS education, our committee has leveraged social media to strengthen relationships with other cardiovascular societies. In 2020, we organized a “Twitter chat” in conjunction with the American College of Cardiology. This educational online discussion on the topic of lifestyle modifications to treat atrial fibrillation was led by a panel of experts from both societies and ultimately included more than 350 participants worldwide. The robust discussion generated more than 1800 tweets and nearly 18 million impressions (a measure of reach to a virtual audience) on Twitter. More recently, in 2022, we organized a Twitter chat in conjunction with the European Heart Rhythm Association on the topic of digital health and wearable devices. This online discussion had similarly high engagement and included more than 100 participants from around the globe, generating more than 2.4 million impressions on Twitter. These activities significantly increase the reach of our society, both to national and international cardiovascular professionals and to patients who are active on social media platforms.

Moving forward, the Communications Committee has several goals to enhance how and what our society communicates:

1. *Meet members where they are.* People communicate in different ways. HRS needs to offer different, and overlapping, forms of communication so that members can digest

content at a time, and in a manner, which is most convenient for them. For some, that may mean perusing an email from the HRS President; for others, that may be clicking on a social media post; and for some, traditional “snail mail” may remain the most effective way for HRS to communicate with its members. Our organization must embrace new communication platforms but remain aware of which modalities are actually being used by our members. In a similar vein, HRS communications have often tended to flow in one direction: from the society to its members. We need to develop better tools to allow members to communicate back to the society and for those communications to feel like a dialog. The HRS Communities platform at *HRSONline.org* is one such opportunity for members to communicate with HRS leadership and staff.

2. *Expand outreach to non-HRS members.* Our society communications have traditionally been directed to HRS members. However, we must also develop strategies for reaching out to groups beyond the society membership. For instance, as a field, cardiac electrophysiology needs to get trainees interested and engaged in our field as early as possible in order to ensure that we continue to attract the best, brightest, and most diverse talent. Currently, our ability to reach medical students, internal medicine trainees, cardiology fellows, and allied health professional trainees is somewhat limited. Many of these younger individuals use social media platforms, such as Instagram or TikTok, where HRS has not traditionally had a significant presence. Beyond trainees, our communications also need to do a better job of reaching health professionals outside cardiovascular medicine, industry partners, and individuals in the digital health space.
3. *Communication with international membership.* One quarter of the HRS membership resides outside the United States. Our communication and outreach efforts need to reflect the truly global nature of our field. The delivery of health care and the challenges faced by cardiac electrophysiology professionals vary significantly from country to country. The tools that health care professionals use to communicate with each other globally are also heterogeneous. The Communications Committee would like to see HRS better able to tailor its communications, both in content and in platform, to our international membership.

The HRS Communications Committee is committed to ensuring that our society be able to communicate with both members and nonmembers in the most effective way possible. We welcome feedback on how HRS can enhance its communications efforts. Please contact us at Journal@hrsonline.org and include “Committee Viewpoint Feedback” in the subject line.

Reference

1. Han JK, Baykaner T, DeSimone CV, et al. Virtual transformation and the use of social media: cardiac electrophysiology education in the post-COVID-19 era. *Curr Treat Options Cardiovasc Med* 2021;23:70.