

Micro-blogging, Latest Tool in the Web 2.0

Micro-blogging is defined in Wikipedia as “a form of blogging that allows users to write brief text updates (usually 140 characters) and publish them, either to be viewed by anyone or by a restricted group which can be chosen by the user. These messages can be submitted by a variety of means, including text messaging, instant messaging, e-mail, MP3 or the Web”. Micro-blogging allows users to write brief text updates on the go, and share them with friends and interested observers. Popular examples of micro-blogging services include Twitter (<http://twitter.com/>), Tumblr (<http://www.tumblr.com/>) and Jaiku (<http://jaiku.com/>). The “status” feature of social-networking services such as Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/>) provides another example of micro-blogging. The content of a micro-blog differs from a traditional blog in that it is typically more topical, smaller in file size (e.g. text, audio or video).

Recently new services with the feature of micro-blogging have been launched. Plurk (<http://www.plurk.com/>) has timeline view which integrates video and picture sharing. Identi.ca (<http://identi.ca/>) integrates micro-blogging with file sharing and event invitations. Recently an Indian company has come up with a micro-blogging website DilKholKebol.com (<http://www.dilkholkebol.com/>).

Twitter is the most popular tool and the company name is used synonymously with micro-blogging. Media companies such as the BBC and The New York Times are trying out Twitter as a way to send headlines. The campaigns for presidential candidates such as Barack Obama also had Twitter profiles, with thousands of “friends” and “followers”. Victims of Mumbai- Taj tragedy used the tool to stay in touch with family and friends.

HOW TO START

While you are not required to have a mobile phone with text messaging to use micro-blogging services, you will get a lot more out of them if you do. To get started, you can register for a free Twitter account or a free Jaiku account online. With both services, you can upload a photo of yourself and make your micro-blog private or public.

WHY DO DOCTORS NEED “TWITTER”?

Doctors have a lot of social connections in the real world. There is a total lack of time to manage these connections. A doctor has to manage his life in several circles during the day (family, patients, hospitals, professional connections). There is consistent flow of data and knowledge through the day from family, patients and internet. “Twitter” can help the medical community in the following ways:

1. *Creating Twitter webpage for every doctor in the hospital:* All doctors can share even small updates about the subject and patients on the go. Even nurses can trace and inform doctors about the status of patients and appointments.
2. *Conferences:* Twitter can be used for the service of attendees and for the organizers for better control and managing the events, lectures and sessions.
3. *Creating small social networking* with “special” complicated patients who needs close and careful follow-up.
4. *Added tool for support groups* with various health conditions.

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