Planning to Use Social Media

Before you decide to add any social media channels to your communications program, you need to:
- review your strategic plan
- do a needs assessment
- think about who you want to reach, what they need to know, and why you want to reach them

Ask yourself:
- Who are the people most in need of getting the information? What media are they using?
- What do I want to achieve from the new service?
- Is this new channel right for our organization?
- Do we have anything like it already?
- Can we adapt something we already have?
- Can I use something from another program?
- How much will it cost to start the service? To keep it going?
- What are the benefits for the people who will use it? For my organization?

Tip
Look at other organizations programs to see what is working for them. But remember that there are many differences between organizations and countries (such as health care systems, funding, and population) that you need to consider when thinking about adapting others' programs.

Who uses social media?
Since social media is a dynamic and growing field, especially for health care organizations, data on its use is constantly changing. As you begin, you need to find data for your own area. Look at who is using the channels you are interested in. Get as much data as you can on how they are being used and by whom.

- Worldwide, the average time spent per person on social networking sites is nearly 5.5 hours per month. Facebook accounts for the majority of that time, with the average user logging in more than 19 times a month.[ii]
- 70 percent of the world's population now has mobile phones, totalling 5 billion mobile subscribers. Some 72 percent of U.S. physicians own smartphones.[iii]
- More than 10 million U.S. adults use mobile devices for health information.
- Facebook, with its 500 million members, leads the social media market (except in Russia, Netherlands, Japan, and China).[iv]

Some 350 billion tweets are delivered each day. The average (median) age for a Twitter user is 31, older than the median MySpace user who is 26, but younger than the median