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**SOCIAL MEDIA AND PALLIATIVE MEDICINE:
A TWO YEAR ANALYSIS OF GLOBAL TWITTER DATA**

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Background Social media involves the use of technological applications to facilitate the exchange of information in a virtual environment. Social media use is increasing in both professional and social contexts. Twitter© is an online social networking service and micro-blogging service that enables its users to send and read text-based messages of up to 140 characters, known as ‘tweets’. Twitter© users can prefix a keyword with a hashtag (#) allowing users to ‘tag’ the message to a particular subject of interest. Social media is used by some palliative care organisations to raise awareness and provide information. However, the degree and scope of the current use of social media to discuss palliative care issues has not previously been reported.

Aims To determine the frequency, sentiment and trend of ‘tweets’ containing palliative care related hashtags and/or phrases.

Methods A retrospective analysis of Twitter© of all tweets sent on Twitter© between August 2011 and August 2013, using a social media web analytics tool: *TopsyPro*©.

Findings A total of 683.5K tweets containing a combination of 13 palliative care terms were sent on Twitter. The tweet volume has increased by 62.3% annually (262.5K in 2012 versus 421K in 2013). The most popular terms include end-of-life (210K), #hpm (114K) and ‘palliative care’ (93.8K). Sentiment was high with 89% of tweets terms more positive than all other tweets sent in this period. The term ‘Liverpool Care Pathway’ experienced the highest percentage increase in tweets (55% increase) reaching a peak in July 2013.

Conclusions A lot of discussion about palliative care is currently taking place on Twitter©, and the majority of this dialogue is positive. Social media presents an opportunity engage with the public and professional groups; further work is needed to determine how this can be effectively coordinated.