



The Elms Family Medical Centre Facebook page.

The Elms Family Medical Centre, located in the semi-rural township of Bacchus Marsh in Victoria, has recently started using Facebook to communicate health education messages that are relevant to the clinic as well as more social messages related to the local community.

Dr Rob Hosking, one of the practice's founding partners, manages the page and is finding the information that he can access about the audience and the posts a great way to determine what works and what doesn't. "I get access to all sorts of interesting analyses which we don't get from traditional notices in the waiting room and paper newsletters."

Facebook provides access to Page Insights which allows page managers to understand if people are engaging with the content they publish. Page Insights provides details on which posts have the most Likes, Comments and Shares which means that page managers can see what content resonates with their audience and provide similar content to increase engagement with the page.

"Page views go up dramatically when there is a picture, and especially if the picture is more of a social nature than a health educational nature," observes Dr Hosking. "The... way to get more friends is to intersperse the educational information with social type photos."

Page Insights also provides basic demographic information about people who like your page and this includes gender and age. "One interesting point is the demographics of the people who are engaging with our page. In particular, there is a very large preponderance of young women between 20 and 40."

"Another interesting phenomenon is that the likes for educational topics such as contraception are very low, despite the demographics. We asked some of the young women directly, whom we know personally, and they said they did not want their friends to know that they liked such a page. While we may think something is of great importance and relevance, our Facebook friends may be reluctant to spread the message if it is a sensitive topic that may reflect on them."

Facebook also allows page managers to pay to promote pages via ads that show in News Feed or to boost specific posts that appear higher in News Feed so there is a better chance to reach your audience. "We have also experimented with paid promotion of posts," says Dr Hosking. "The analytics claims a large number of views as a result of this fairly cheap advertising, but.. we have not yet noticed anyone attending the clinic as a result of these posts."

The Elms Family Medical Centre's Facebook page includes links to health updates on other websites, welcomes to new staff, details of new health related apps for smartphones, news about community projects and updates on the practice. "We are trying to post only about once per week so as to not overload the audience, and then get unliked."

Facebook allows people to connect with things they care about and creating a page to represent your business will also let you share stories that are unique with a wider community of people. For the Elms Family Medical Centre it is only early days and while they haven't actually had a patient talk about a Facebook post during a consultation or noticed an increase in business by continuing to create posts that are interesting and valuable to their followers, Facebook, has the potential to build closer relationships with not just their patients but the community as a whole.