FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Twitter a Popular Source for Vaccination Information, Debate

Washington, DC, May 30, 2013 – Twitter is a popular source for receiving and sharing new information about vaccines, and also a basically reliable one, according to a study published in the June issue of the *American Journal of Infection Control*, the official publication of the Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology (APIC).

Researchers from the University of Texas at Austin analyzed 9,510 vaccination-related tweets from one week in January, 2012 to determine the most popular and influential messages. A final sample of 2,580 tweets that had received engagement through re-posting and sharing was then coded for frequency of sharing, tone toward vaccinations, links to sources (e.g., news outlets, advocacy groups, or healthcare providers), and whether the claims being made in each tweet were scientifically substantiated.

Overall, 33 percent of the 2,580 tweets carried a positive tone about vaccines, 54 percent were neutral, and 13 percent were negative. Of the 14 percent of tweets that contained medical information, more than two-thirds offered content substantiated by scientific research.

The most popular messages concerned a potential children's malaria vaccine, development of the NeuVax E-75 vaccine for breast cancer, the effectiveness of a herpes vaccine in women, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's recommendation of a human papilloma virus vaccination for boys, potential approval for a lung cancer vaccine, and a blog post discrediting vaccine-autism connections.

Frequent information sources shared through tweets included health-specific sites such as *WebMD* (16 percent of 341 links), national media such as *The New York Times* (13 percent), medical organizations such as the American Medical Association (12 percent), and digital news aggregators including the *Huffington Post* (10 percent). The specific outlets mentioned are representative examples, though did dominate their categories.

"News and health organizations received mostly positive attention in comparison with political or advocacy groups, indicating users are favorably viewing established sources in their health-information seeking," state the authors. "In this sample, it appears that Twitter users share mostly reputable information and sources while actively mobilizing others to seek reliable health information. Results of the snapshot can help explain what social media content patients consume and respond to, as well as help determine directions for educational campaigns."

ABOUT AJIC: *AMERICAN JOURNAL OF INFECTION CONTROL*
AJIC: American Journal of Infection Control (www.ajicjournal.org) covers key topics and issues in infection control and epidemiology. Infection preventionists, including physicians, nurses, and epidemiologists, rely on *AJIC* for peer-reviewed articles covering clinical topics as well as original research. As the official publication of APIC, *AJIC* is the foremost resource on infection control, epidemiology, infectious diseases, quality management, occupational health, and disease prevention. *AJIC* also publishes infection control guidelines from APIC and the CDC. Published by Elsevier, AJIC is included in MEDLINE and CINAHL.

ABOUT APIC
APIC's mission is to create a safer world through prevention of infection. The association's more than 14,000 members direct infection prevention programs that save lives and improve the bottom line for hospitals and other healthcare facilities. APIC advances its mission through patient safety, implementation science, competencies and certification, advocacy, and data standardization. Visit APIC online at www.apic.org. Follow APIC on Twitter: http://twitter.com/apic.

NOTES FOR EDITORS
"Twitter as a source of vaccination information: Content drivers and what they are saying" by Brad Love, Itai Himelboim, Avery Holton, and Kristin Stewart appears in the *American Journal of Infection Control*, Volume 41, Issue 6 (June 2013).

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