

The it themselves.  
they don't feel the  
need

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**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

The spreading of awareness is extremely important in everyday life. It is educating the many people who are ignorant about a subject or have a different perception on it. If we look back to the history of United States, we can see that many people have previously died because of their ignorance of certain diseases that were undiagnosed.

Deaths that could have been prevented if there was a bigger spread of this information. The internet is a huge source of information and education, accessed by the young and old, in which we can find in a swift click of a button. But sadly, many people wouldn't learn about diseases until they actually have it themselves. They don't feel the need to search for information that they feel does not pertain to them at the moment. That's when social media helps play a role in its effectiveness of spreading awareness and education among avid users.

Of course, there have been many cases when social media has proven time and time again that it helps the spread of information, but there are many who disagree. Many people are skeptical of the role of social media has on spreading awareness among members of society. Which they are rightfully so at times because of the "ALS Ice Bucket Challenge" and many other challenges you probably have seen on your news feed or timeline in the past have been raging on social media. The ALS Ice Bucket Challenge was something huge back in 2014. The challenge was to propagate the awareness of the fatal disease called amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, otherwise known as Lou Gehrig's disease. I saw as most of the people I followed poured buckets of ice cold water on their selves jokingly challenging other people to the same as them.

I found it very odd and didn't know exactly why they were doing it because they themselves had not explicitly said anything nor wrote anything in the caption of the post except for #icebucketchallenge. Some didn't even have the hashtag at all! Thinking back to it made me realized that there were probably many people out there who did the same. It leads to the question as to why are these people posting these videos? Is it for personal gain, such as likes, attention, views; or is it because they know what the challenge was originally for and want to spread the knowledge of this? When I watched those videos, it truly seemed like they just wanted to post a video just because they were challenged or because they felt left out of the " group".

" You have to express yourself now, while your emotions roil, while your temper flares, while your humor lasts. You can try to hide yourself from real scrutiny, and the exposure it demands, but it's hard" (Sullivan). As Sullivan says, it is hard to put yourself out there truthfully. The people who post just because others are posting are creating a façade for themselves because they don't want to be seen as the only people who do not care enough about the subject to share a post or upload one up themselves. They are driven by society what society thinks what they should do and not what they truly want to do. So, many skeptics believe that these selfish reasons don't bear good fruits. On the other hand, challenges like the " ALS Ice Bucket Challenge" also proves that social media does help spread the awareness of disease.

We can look up on google and see the spike of google searches in 2014, pertaining to what the challenge was and why it was made. Many posts like

these help spark interest in people at any time during their daily use of social media. A nice picture, video, or maybe even a funny meme sometimes draws the audience's attention to the problem at hand. People in this day and age want to get straight to the point of things and not having to look things up for themselves. The posts themselves can give a brief information on the subject to attracts the readers attention. " A blog, therefore, bobs on the surface of the ocean but has its anchorage in waters deeper than those print media is technologically able to exploit" (Sullivan). Not a lot of people like reading huge articles on subjects. But luckily for the ones that do, there are hyperlinks that can redirect the audience to trustworthy sites which help the cause for the fight of the disease.

" Yes, a few sentences of bloggy spin may not be as satisfying as a full column, but the ability to read the primary material instantly—in as careful or shallow a fashion as you choose—can add much greater context than anything on paper" (Sullivan). Is awareness enough though? What does being aware of a disease accomplish in the fight against it. According to the ALS Association website, the ice bucket challenge helped raised \$220 million dollars in donations. The association had been able to put a lot of that money into research for the cure of that disease.

For the fight against cancer, there have been many walks, fundraisers and donations to organizations that help with the search for a solution to it. " The platforms of social media are built around weak ties...There is strength in weak ties, as the sociologist Mark Granovetter has observed. Our acquaintances—not our friends—are our greatest source of new ideas and

information. The Internet lets us exploit the power of these kinds of distant connections with marvellous efficiency" (Gladwell). Many people gain the knowledge of these types of help through the posts of social media.

Someone could be on their social media account scrolling and see that there is an event or fundraiser in their town through a post in which they would otherwise not have known about. As Gladwell writes, "' Social networks are particularly effective at increasing motivation,' Aaker and Smith write.

But that's not true. Social networks are effective at increasing participation—by lessening the level of motivation that participation requires." It's so easy to click like or share a post, which means more and more people are exposed to the same posts on their feed. It doesn't even matter if some people upload them to " fit in" or to look good, as the posts keep spreading, it will inevitably reach people who have the heart and commitment to at least donate or even participate in these events. This in turn, shines hope on the victims, letting them know that there are people out there who are truly trying to help them in their fight against their illnesses. Yes, there are many diseases today, such as cancers, that have no cure so far; but with all the awareness spread vastly by these social media sites about donations and drives raise money towards that cure. There are also many accounts of people who were able to prevent the worsening of diseases or even the disease itself because of the information they found on social media sites that helped them check for early signs.

This knowledge helped them seek the treatment which they otherwise thought they wouldn't have needed. I was able to interview a woman

named Maria Mendoza who managed to detect small lumps on her breast area that could have been fatal if medical attention was not sought. During this interview, I asked her opinion of how effective is the spread of awareness throughout social media. The interviewee responded saying that she believed that it can be extremely helpful because of the number of people who use social media daily. I also asked, “ Was any of the posts that you saw while browsing social media in any way informative or guided you to learn more about an illness?” The lady responded saying that after seeing many posts about breast cancer and how you can detect signs of it early on, that she went to the doctor on her own. She found two small lumps cystic fibromas after finding out how to and had to keep visiting the doctor until he finally sent her to get mammography.

It was then that they discovered that she had fibrocystic breast. This was extremely alarming, especially because of the many deaths of cancer in her family. Thanks to the early diagnosis, the doctors were able to give her the medical attention needed. Social media platforms are a source of so much information that can be extremely useful. Of course, these types of platforms are seen by many as personal thing, but to others, it is a way to broadcast the information that needs to be seen by many. Whether or not this information is being spread through selfish reasons or caring reasons, the awareness of the disease is still spread and are being heard by the people who truly need it. Thanks to social media, many are becoming aware and are helping others do the same.