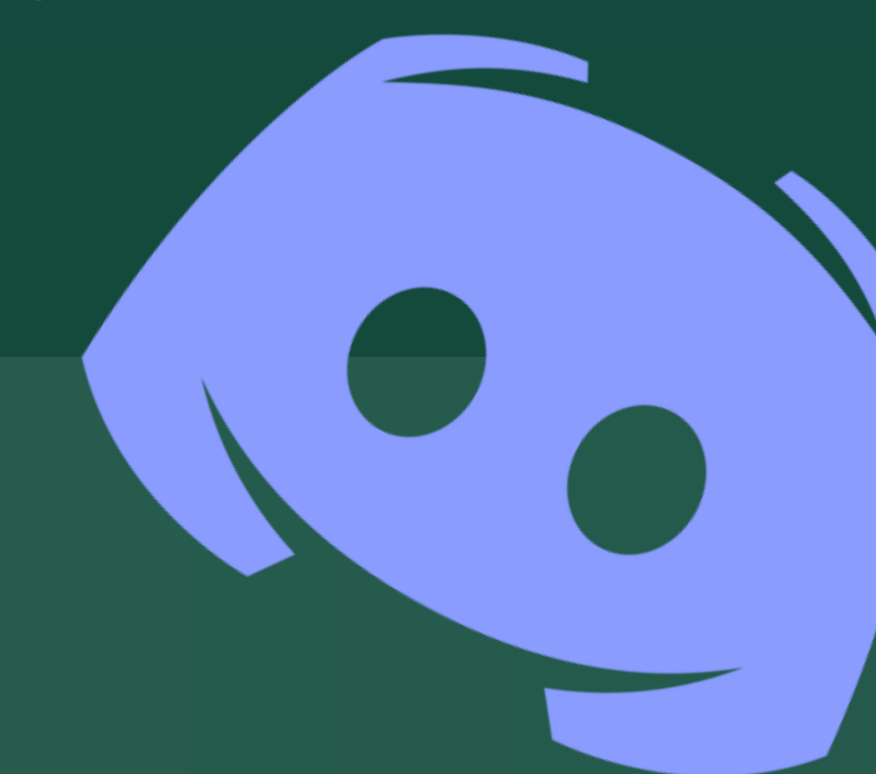




Impact of an Online Social Platform on Medical Student Wellness and Perceptions of Communication



Ala Addin Sid Ahmed¹, James MacKenzie¹, Chaitanya Dandu¹, Andrew Lange¹, Diane Levine MD,² Eva Waineo MD²
¹ Medical student, Wayne State University School of Medicine ² Faculty, Wayne State University School of Medicine

BACKGROUND

- Medical schools have been developing ways to combat the feelings of isolation in students that can lead to burnout and depression.¹
- Wayne State School of Medicine (WSUSOM) Medical Student Check In Survey found that poor communication is frequently brought up as a roadblock to wellness by medical students.
- The COVID19 pandemic resulted in the acceleration of an already existing **trend of online/distance learning** with a significant reduction of in-person interactions, both in the medical school environment and in other aspects of students' lives.²

STUDY AIMS

This study aims to explore **the impact of the online communication platform Discord** on student perceptions of wellness and engagement.

INTRODUCTION TO DISCORD

- Discord is a messaging platform that allows use of different communication channels, engagement with other users through audio, video, emoticons, and ability to upload files of interest.
- The WSUSOM Discord server was used in the hopes of improving organization and efficiency of intra and inter class communication at the SOM.
- Students can communicate with the entire class, directly message individual students who are part of the discord community, as well as communicate in interest specific channels.
- Discord was not initially developed for medical students, but rather for gaming. It has been used in secondary education, but to our knowledge, there are no current studies that explore a similar type of communication platform for medical education.

SURVEY QUESTIONS

Survey Questions For Students (In Development)

Please state how much you agree or disagree with the following statements using a scale 1-5:

1. I feel engaged with the class using Discord
2. Online platforms make it easy to get to know my classmates
3. Online platforms are a good substitute for in-person interactions
4. Using private, school-related online platforms makes me feel like part of a community
5. I like having a form of communication with classmates that isn't specifically associated with the school
6. Having an online platform to communicate with my classmates lowers my anxiety about school
7. I have made friends with people solely from online interactions
8. I feel socializing with classmates is an important component of medical school
9. On a scale of introverted to extroverted, I consider myself as
10. Having an online platform to communicate with my classmates makes me feel less isolated/lonely
11. If I am struggling, I feel more comfortable reaching out online than in person

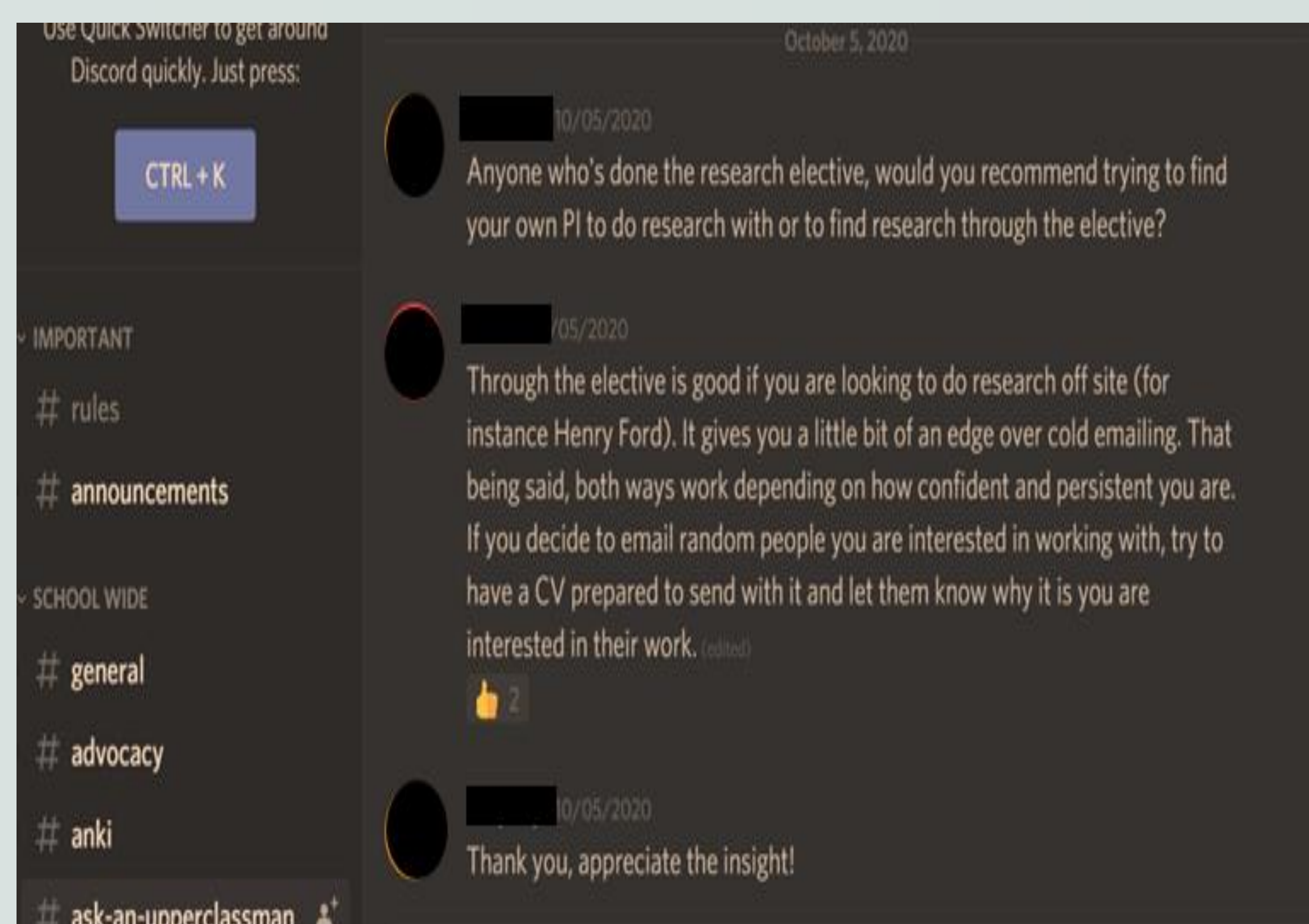


Figure 1: Photo of Discord Communication Platform

METHODS and ANALYSIS

Participants

- 1st and 2nd year medical students

Data Collection Plan

- Literature review
- Complete IRB
- Finalize Qualtrics survey which will include a validated scale on engagement & wellness
- Send anonymous survey to participants via email

Analysis

- Data will be analyzed using the Qualtrics Survey Software System and will look for correlations between use of discord, wellness, & engagement.

POTENTIAL IMPACT

- Data from this research will help to facilitate a better understanding of ways to promote wellness through online interactions.
- This research may inspire innovation with respect to communication and engagement amongst medical students through new platforms, positively impacting the medical school learning environment.
- If proved to positively impact medical students, starting a similar online platform is a feasible and low-cost initiative easily implemented by medical students at other schools to foster communication amongst peers.
- This initiative illustrates the importance of student led innovation with respect to both student wellness and medical education.

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