

Use of Social Media and Other Electronic Media in Health Education and Health Promotion (Pilot Study)

Abdullah S Alshammari, Hotoon S Alshammari
College of Medicine, Almaarefa College, College of Medicine
Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University

ABSTRACT

Background: social media is becoming progressively used for improving health literacy and health promotion.

Objectives: this study aimed to find out the magnitude of use of social media among people of Saudi Arabia and how far they were used to send health education messages.

Methods: this study was a cross sectional study was conducted on convenient sample of participants using survey monkey software. The collected surveys over one month were entered into PC computer using SPSS software. **Results:** it was found that the majority of participants used one sort of social media or another. Also it was found that Instagram, WhatsApp and SMS were the most preferred media. There were age and gender differences. More than 50% of the participants received health promotion messages and they thought that it was a good idea.

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Conclusion: it's a good opportunity to use these preferred social media to send health education messages to the target population.

Keywords: Electronic Media, Social Media, Health Education, Health Promotion.

INTRODUCTION

Since the introduction of social network sites such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube between 1997 and 2006, they have attracted millions of users with a wide range of interests all over the world. They were integrated into their daily practices. Most sites of those help diverse audiences connect based on shared interests and activities⁽¹⁾. They introduce substantial changes to communication between organizations, communities, and individuals. Social media differ from traditional media in many ways, including quality; frequency, usability, immediacy, and permanence. There are many effects that stem from internet usage.

The World health organization (WHO) estimates that more than 347 million people are affected by diabetes worldwide and expects the disease to become the 7th cause of death by 2030. In the year 2010 alone, over 3.4 million people died because of complications related to high fasting blood glucose⁽²⁾. In Saudi Arabia, studies have shown that 23.7% of the population was

affected by Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus in 2004⁽³⁾.

Almost 10 years later, this number is expected to have increased significantly. The burden of the disease raises great social and economic concerns. So far, type 2 Diabetes Mellitus burdens the Saudi economy with a total of over \$0.87 billion⁽⁴⁾.

Hypertension is extremely grievous disease, which is rapidly becoming one of the most common chronic diseases internationally as well as locally in Saudi Arabia. A highly reliable study emphasizes that the prevalence of hypertension among adults in our community reach up to 30%⁽⁵⁾.

Complications of hypertension are catastrophic, and death is probable as it is a leading cause for coronary heart disease, stroke, Kidney diseases and many others. High percentage of undiagnosed cases in KSA reaches up to 27%, which is an alarming sign. Furthermore, neglecting by many diagnosed, as treatment requires the outmost perseverance, can and will aggravate the problem⁽⁶⁾.

Hypertension is one of the most common worldwide diseases afflicting humans. Because of the associated morbidity and mortality and the cost to society, hypertension is an important public health challenge. The overall prevalence of hypertension was 25.5% of the adult Saudi population ⁽⁷⁾, Only 44.7% of hypertensive were aware, 71.8% of them received pharmacotherapy, and only 37.0% were controlled ⁽⁸⁾.

In Saudi Arabia, high prevalence of deaths is attributed to CHD. The reported prevalence of coronary artery among the people of KSA at all age group is 5.5%, whereas in the age group between 30 years to 39 years group it is increasing by 3.9% every year ^(9,10).

Health authority worldwide are beginning to use social media to educate and inform their constituents about diabetes. An understanding of the reach and effectiveness of social media could enable public health practitioners to use them more effectively ⁽¹¹⁾.

OBJECTIVES

To find out the magnitude of using social media and other electronics means in health education and health promotion. Further the opinion of the participants about use fullness of these means is assessed.

METHODS

This is a cross sectional study. A predesign questionnaire was constructed using Survey Monkey software. Then it was emailed to the participants. It was sent to the medical students mail groups and posted throw Facebook and Twitter. The data collection was during mid of November to mid of December. Data analysis was done using SPSS software version 20. For statistical analysis Chi Square test was used.

RESULTS

In the current study 64 participants completed the survey.

Table 1: shows that 81.5% log into social media more than once a day. It also shows that 87.5% females and 79.6% males were among the highest users of social media. But the difference is not statistically significant.

How often do you log into social media	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Less than a few times a month	1 2.0%	0 0.0%	1 1.5%
A few times a week	2 4.1%	1 6.3%	3 4.6%
More than once a day	39 79.6%	14 87.5%	53 81.5%
A few times a month	2 4.1%	0 0.0%	2 3.1%
About once a day	5 10.2%	1 6.3%	6 9.2%
Total	49 100.0%	16 100.0%	65 100.0%

Table 2: shows that 85.7% participants above 25 years old logs into social media more than once a day however, about 80.4% participants aged 25< log into social media

How often do you log into social media	Age in years		Total
	<25	>25	
Less than a few times a month	1(2.0%)	0(0.0%)	1(1.5%)
A few times a week	2(3.9%)	1(7.1%)	3(4.6%)
More than once a day	41(80.4%)	12(85.7%)	53(81.5%)
A few times a month	2(3.9%)	0(0.0%)	2(3.1%)
About once a day	5(9.8%)	1(7.1%)	6(9.2)
Total	51(100.0%)	14(100.0%)	65(100.0%)

Table 3: shows that most use of social media was YOUTUBE about 92.3% participants aged less than 25 years old which was the highest

	Age in Years		Total	P-value
	< 25	>25		
Instagram	37(80.4%)	9(19.6%)	46(100.0%)	0.38
YouTube	24(92.3%)	2(7.7%)	26(100%)	0.025
Twitter	33(89.2%)	4(10.8%)	37(100%)	0.01
Facebook	34(81.0%)	8(19.0%)	42(100.0%)	0.36
WhatsApp	49(83.1%)	10(16.9%)	59(100.0%)	0.01
SMS	32(80.0%)	8(20.0%)	40(100.0%)	0.46
Emails	37	7	44	0.01
Average	84.1%	15.9%	100.0%	0.01

Table 4: shows that participants aged above 25 years old and females received more health education messages.

		In the last month did you receive any health education material?		Total
		Yes	No	
Age		26	25	51
	≤25	51.0%	49.0%	100.0%
		9	5	14
	>25	64.3%	35.7%	100.0%
Gender		26	23	49
	Male	53.1%	46.9%	100.0%
	Female	9	7	16
		56.3%	43.8%	100.0%

Table 5: shows that about 26% and 18% of participants received health education messages regarding diseases and their treatment respectively. Dietary advice was received by 26% of the participants

	Frequency	Percent
Diet	17	26.2
Treatment	12	18.5
Road traffic accident	6	9.2
Physical exercise	13	20.0
Diseases	17	26.2

Table 6: shows that male participants use all types of social media more than female counterparts except in Twitter, WhatsApp and Instagram where female use is higher than males

	Gender		Total
	Male(49)	Female(16)	
YouTube	23(46.9%)	3(18.7%)	26
Twitter	26(53.0%)	11(86.7%)	37
Facebook	38(77.6%)	4(25%)	42
WhatsApp	44(89.8%)	15(93.8%)	59
Instagram	32(65.3%)	14(87.5%)	46
SMS	32(65.3%)	8(50%)	40
Emails	33(76.3%)	11(68.7%)	44

Table 7: shows that 50% with the idea of using social media in health education of the public. Those who are not using social media attributed their behavior to lack of knowledge and skills, shortage of time or they don't like it or they don't want to waste their time

Opinion	Frequency	Percent
Good Idea	37	56.9
Bad Idea	3	4.6
No Opinion	25	38.5

Table 8: reasons for not using social media

Reason	Frequency	Percent
I don't know how to use it	2	3.1
I don't have time	5	7.7
I don't like it	6	9.2
I think its waste of time	3	4.6
No comment	49	75.4

DISCUSSION

The majority of the participants in the current study were using social media particularly Instagram, WhatsApp and SMS. Furthermore, they were found to log on to them more than once a day. This understandable due to easiness and convenience of sending and receiving through this media. This finding is similar to studies done elsewhere.

Its encouraging to find that a substantial number of participants received health education messages through various types of social media. For such reason some health authorities decided to make use of such media to send health education messages to their target audience. This experience was promising and was successful in some areas. Here in Saudi Arabia we are in great need of increasing people awareness of non communicable diseases and improve health promotion effort through the use of social media

intensively. Particularly the current study showed that more than 50% of the participants felt that it a good idea to receive health education messages through their preferred social media application. People can receive dietary and physical activity advice on daily bases. People suffering from diabetes mellitus or hypertension for example can be educated about their diseases, trained how to manage and monitor their control. Health professionals may encourage their patients particularly those who were not using them to realize the usefulness of such media.

The current study is small and uses a convenient sampling method which limit its representativeness and generalization of the finding. Thus, we recommend a bigger sample with appropriate randomization to be conducted on such important field.

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