B1-16: Online Social Networking and Diabetes

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Abstract:
Introduction: The Chronic Care Model demonstrates that an informed and activated patient has improved health outcomes. Diabetics who are compliant with their regimen and maintain strict glycemic control have lower rates of complications. Studies show that social support is an effective way to help diabetics improve self-management and improve health outcomes. Through the Internet, online social support programs serve as an interactive medium for providing information, changing attitudes and behaviors, and enhancing social support. However, little is known if popular social networking sites (e.g. Facebook) can be used as a milieu to deliver diabetes education and social support. The aim of this exploratory pilot study was to determine whether diabetics utilize social networking sites and if they would be willing to use these sites to discuss health information.

Method(s): Thirty-five people from the greater Durham, NC area participated in an online Internet survey. We collected data on demographics, Internet and online social networking use,
and diabetes knowledge and self-care activities. The sample composition included 27 women with an average age of 42 years (21-79) and with an average time from diagnoses with diabetes of 7 years (1-61); approximately half the sample were from minority groups.

**Results:** Preliminary results show that 51.4% (n=18) utilize online social networking sites, and of these 75% (n=21) access these sites at least 2-4 times weekly. 14.3% (n=5) have discussed health information online and 65.7% (n=23) would be willing to discuss health information online.

**Discussion & Conclusions:** These results suggest that popular online social networking sites may be an appropriate setting for nurses to deliver diabetes education and to implement social support networking for improving diabetes outcomes and self-care. Further research is needed to understand how we can use these sites to reach people where they are and how to utilize features of these sites for education and support. Future research will need to utilize a larger sample size and focus on differences in population demographics (e.g. age and length of diagnoses).

**Abstract History:**

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