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Role of Social Media Use on Deaf Adults' Electronic Communication with Health Care Providers¹

Introduction

Social media can increase availability and accessibility of health information, such as reading and sharing health information online and participating in online support groups.² Today, many providers use online patient portals to help manage patients' health needs and to e-communicate with their patients. Most portals allow patients to communicate with their provider via e-mail or the Internet.

Existing research suggests that social media use can promote e-communication with healthcare providers.^{3,4} Prior to this study, research on deaf adults' health-related social media use and usage of e-communication with their providers remained largely unknown.

To explore whether deaf adults' health-related social media use is linked to e-communication with providers, data from the Health Information National Trends Survey in ASL (HINTS ASL) was used.⁵

Findings

Based on a national sample of 515 deaf adults aged 18 or over who use the Internet, approximately 50% used social media for health-related activities, such as joining online support groups for a health condition and sharing posts about medical topics.

Deaf respondents who engaged in e-Health activities were found to be nearly three times more likely to communicate with their provider online compared to their peers who did not engage in e-Health activities (Figure 1).

The availability of health information and social support through social media, online patient portals, and e-communication with providers can be beneficial for deaf individuals, especially for those who already use the internet or may have low health literacy.^{6,7} In particular, videos through social media can increase availability of accessible health information in deaf adults' primary language, ASL. Likewise, the ability to communicate and discuss with healthcare providers electronically serves as another avenue to increase one's health knowledge. Providers should encourage the use of e-communication with their patients, which can be a powerful venue for private information-sharing about one's health.

Quick Facts

- A national sample of 515 deaf adults who use the internet
- Collected between October 2015 and April 2018
- Deaf participants who used social media to post and share health information were three times more likely to communicate with their healthcare providers through the Internet

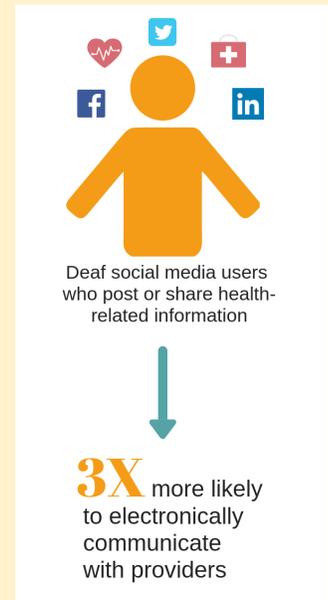


Figure 1

About Deaf Health Communication and Quality of Life Center

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The Deaf Health Communication and Quality of Life Center's mission is to conduct research that links accessibility to health outcomes among deaf/hard of hearing individuals.

The Center's briefs provide a snapshot of noteworthy, data-driven research findings from the Center. The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of the NIH.

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