

## Public Abstract

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Graduation Term:FS 2017

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Title:PERCEPTIONS OF FACEBOOK AND TWITTER AS SOURCES OF HEALTH INFORMATION AMONG AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMEN

**Objective:** The purpose of this study was to explore how African-American women perceive Facebook and Twitter as sources for information about heart disease. **Methods:** A qualitative study was conducted among 23 women between the ages of 18 and 70, who selfidentified as Black and female. Participants were recruited from both urban and rural cities. Data collected during each 60-minute or less focus group session was analyzed and grouped into key themes. **Results:** Among the Black women who participated in the research, findings indicated that Facebook and Twitter are perceived as credible sources of health information if the material shared comes from a health care professional or organization, or a friend speaking from a personal health experience. Credibility increased if information was presented by a person of color—particularly of the same race. Knowledge gained via social media was largely deemed to be the spring board for further research via a tool or website that is established within the health care industry. Participants also expounded upon the importance of one advocating for themselves in the doctor's office and fact checking health information and professionals. **Conclusion:** Health professionals may be able to more effectively communicate health information to Black women via Facebook and Twitter. Recommendations such as establishing credibility and using women of color in visuals are made that may assist in prompting health behavior changes.

**Key words:** Women, African American, health information seeking, social media, heart disease