

# The Influence of Peers Social Structure in Healthcare Social Networking Websites

*Emergent Research Forum papers*

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## Abstract

Although the demand for online patients to look for online health information is in high, few of them seems to demonstrate effective use of the health Social Network Sites (SNSs). Exploring the design features that can motivate individuals to actively participate in the health SNSs is crucial to develop platforms that can support sustainable online social structure. This study seeks to investigate the influence of the *peers structure capacity* as an important feature of health SNSs on two individuals' behaviors, *effective SNSs use* and *willingness to share Personal Health Information (PHI)*. Accordingly, our goals in this research are in twofold: First, identifying the psychological influence of the SNSs structure that helps individuals find others who have similar medical conditions and concerns (i.e. shape their peer group), and second, examining the impact of these psychological factors on effective SNSs use and willingness to disclose PHI. The study is expected to have theoretical and practical contribution. Theoretically, the study would shed light on the psychological process underlying individuals' effective use of healthcare social platforms and their willingness to reveal their PHI. Practically, the study would demonstrate the importance of developing *peers-centered* health social sites, which emphasize structuring the site into different peer's social group as well as supplement the site with appropriate mechanisms and strategies that enable users to find their closest peer social group to share social emotional support and further medical advices.

## Keywords

Health social networks sites, Peers structure capacity, Effective use, Personal health information.