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Nourishing healthcare information over Facebook

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Abstract

This study is based on the review of literature, focusing on new media namely Facebook in sustaining and nourishing healthcare information to its users. This is to recognise the capability of Facebook in providing health information and contribute to further awareness on healthcare, nutrition, diet, diseases and remedy information. In addition, it also examines health-related Facebook pages administered by healthcare providers for example specialist, physician, nutritionist or dietician in disseminating information mainly on health; in creating awareness and encouraging behavioural changes. Facebook pages with health-related information were discussed to see how they can be beneficial to new media users.

Keywords: New media; health communication; Facebook; healthcare information; IMB Skills Model

1. Introduction

According to Korda & Itani (2011), social media includes a broad spectrum of online communications tools and work through several mechanisms. Social media can provide a channel for social support and facilitate a sense of connectedness among individuals. They also mention that these online tools let users share information that is consumer-centric and consumer controlled, enabling anonymity or personal connection as preferred, and can be an inexpensive way to reach large audiences over great distances. Perhaps most important, social media have become firmly established across socio-demographic groups. All of these features make social media well suited and popular tools for health promotion (Korda & Itani, 2011). Social media, a phenomenon in which new media trends that is very

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popular nowadays. Social media refers to activities among consumers who collect online and share information using interactive media to facilitate the creation and sharing of content in the form of words, pictures, video and audio (Safko & Brake, 2009). Stern (2009) categorized social media as follows: massage rooms and forums, the spotlight and the opinion space, a series of social, blogs and microblogs, virtual bookmark and media partnerships.

Facebook was introduced by Mark Zurkerberg in 2004, a student at Harvard University (Mohd Zaidi Mahmud and Bahiyah Omar, 2013). Facebook is a social networking site that most people are using. According to Richter and Koch (2008) (cited in Mohd Zaidi Mahmud and Bahiyah Omar, 2013), social networking sites are used to manage identities, finding experts, context, manage contacts and exchange of information. Facebook is a social networking site (SNS). Social networking site such as Facebook has become one of the most important social trends since it introduced to the public in 2006. It is available in 70 different languages making it widely used throughout the world (Caers et al., 2013).

2.0. Health communication and new media

Health communication is one of the branches in the field of communication. According to Thomas (2006), health communication refers to the use of science communication strategies to inform and influence the knowledge, attitudes and practices of individuals and communities in matters of health and health care. Thomas (2006) also noted this area is represented by the field of health communication and any elements that could be identified to improve individual and public health knowledge that will ultimately help in disease prevention and health promotion. Health communication when delivered effectively in the context of mediation media has the potential to be considered important to promote health to individuals, communities’ populations (Ahmed & Bates, 2013).

Social networks in the website such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube provide a new dimension in building relations, make new friends, find and share information, as well as working cooperatively with others (Eysenbach, 2008). Social media consists of text, images, audio and video is a tool to promote, advertise and market a reasonably cheap. It is very helpful in building networks, spread information quickly and thereby promote public trust and confidence. According to Andreas and Haenlien (2010), there are six different types of social media that have collaborative projects (e.g. Wikipedia), blogs and micro-blogging (e.g Twitter), content communities (e.g., YouTube, Flicker), social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, MySpace), virtual games (e.g. Warcraft, Whyville) and the virtual social world (e.g Second Life).

According to House, Borycki and Kushniru (2014), patients can utilize social media where they can connect with others in the effort of sharing and exchange knowledge related to diseases. The study have also suggested the future of social media is convincing and can help local community to continue stay connected, sharing information, data collection, making appointments, prescription notification, health related information dissemination, getting around with elderly residents, increase participation, motivation, self-confidence and skills. Meanwhile, according to Korda and Itani (2011), social media may be an effective platform and extends coverage and interactive by allowing users according to their needs. Moreover, it is also seen to have its own potential in the health communications branch.

Social media turns out to be cheaper and dissemination of information overload can be done very quickly. It is rapidly increasing in the delivery of health promotion and capable of changing consumer attitudes. Social media moves so fast (Gupta, Tyagi, & Sharma, 2013), the platform is seen as able to be used in a variety of health conditions such as promoting vaccination for children, the consequences of smoking and consumption of alcohol at a young age, unhealthy sexual practices and healthy diet among teens. It is also beneficial to all age groups as an inexpensive medium. With the discovery of a variety of mobile application, users can get information anywhere, innovation potential for popular without having to carry a computer together. Social media has a great opportunity for health promotion to the public health community, allowing medical practitioners to communicate directly with the public about health-related issues and at the same time providing advice in reducing the adverse consequences of a health practice that is not correct.

Woolley and Peterson (2012) noted in their study that Facebook is useful in maintaining and promoting a healthy lifestyle in two ways. First, the content of the information posted, the message is to be told, motivate and remind the user to give emphasis on health behavior. Second, the post of users who look for health related information. In their study also noted Facebook may also be used to send messages and provide materials which can help health-oriented
individuals from observation to prepare and ultimately take action. For individuals who already have health attitudes, Facebook can be an effective reference for reminders, tips and useful information to avoid repeated failure of health care.

2.1. Facebook as health information delivery platform

Facebook offers a wide range of information that is very beneficial and helpful in educating and informing its users. Variety of information such as current updates, news, global political situation, climate changes, health awareness and much more can be obtained by accessing through Facebook. According to Richter & Koch (2008), the use of social networking sites (SNS) include identity management, expert finding, context awareness, contact management and information exchange. Meanwhile, Eyesenbach (2008) mentioned that the social networks of the World Wide Web (WWW) such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube have added a new dimension to the way people make friends, find and share information, and work in partnership with other. This clearly indicates that Facebook can be very effective and operative in providing information and sharing of knowledge amongst the users interactively.

In healthcare information sharing, healthcare providers will try their level best in providing information and health matters to their followers. Based on content analysis of Facebook administered by the healthcare providers, lots of health related information can be found beneficial for virtuous health development yet does not compromise to any unhealthy lifestyle. An example of Facebook contain can be found in the Ministry of Health, Malaysia. It shows an illuminating and interpretive posting by the MOH on creating awareness and eliminates taboo against person suffering from AIDS and HIV. These descriptive graphic showing a significant message on how to deal with AIDS and HIV patients by amplification of immediate contact and dealing with the patients will not spread the virus.

Meanwhile in Everyday Health Facebook page, they provides intensive health-related information to their followers on healthy lifestyle, worthy diet and nutrition, exercise guide as well as prognosis for diseases. As quoted from its Facebook’s page “Everyday Health is here to help you take better care of yourself and your family”. They provides the “do’s and don’ts” in the effort of sustaining a good health while preventing from illness and any health disorder. An individual also took part in sharing health-related information via Facebook. An example is Dr Mehmet Oz, a renowned Turkish-American cardiothoracic surgeon, author and television personality. He is very active in sharing information about health through his Facebook page, making transaction and interaction with his followers. He is also on the go in giving out free consultation and health advice via informative footages and pictures. He is also appears in television programme known as The Dr Oz Show and being aired and very famous in the United States and many other countries.

2.2. Interaction between healthcare provider and community

Social media is a communication boon for the public health community and has the potential to promote and change many health-related behaviours and issues particularly in times of crisis (Gupta et al, 2013). Imagine in a vast population, dissemination of health messages through the conventional methods such as distributing leaflets, printed materials and displaying poster seen to be less and less effective as it is not covering the whole populations. Thus, the authorities concerned shall consider the latest methods which are believed to deliver health information to the community in a more effective, inexpensive, simple and faster way.

Social media integrates a very large potential of effective information to be carried over. For instance Facebook has it ability to share a full-fledged of multimedia element such as text, narration, sound, music, graphics, video and many more. It is also contain interactive characteristics as follows: massage rooms and forums, the spotlight and the opinion space, a series of social, blogs and microblogs, virtual bookmark and media partnerships (Stern, 2009). In the context of healthcare provider and community, the social media provides a platform to ease the communication and interaction which eventually allows sharing of healthcare information e.g. health advise and tips, disease threat and prevention, treatment options, prescription and appointment with specialist.

Social media also able to empower patients’ knowledge ability, it has a very promising future and can be used as a
tool to engage and empower the patient (Househ et al., 2014). The study also shows that using video through social
media can have more of an impact on patient engagement than text based interventions (Househ et al., 2014). Furthermore, social media namely Facebook patients able to interact with their doctor on any medical updates without
having a frequent personal meetings. Facebook is also a perfect platform to create awareness by constructing campaign
and promotion. Apatu et al. (2013) in the study on safety driving promotion on Facebook indicates 96 safety driving
Facebook groups which functioning as educating the road users on road safety awareness and no drinking, cell phones
or illegal speeding while driving a vehicle.

2.3. Facebook: A Personal Doctor

As it providing interactivity and connectivity, Facebook received a significant attention. Facebook offered
interactive features which helps enhancing an organization promotional and branding activities by entering visitors
and encouraging their repeat use of an organization’s social media site (Zarella, 2009). Facebook has become the
choice of many in search of information. It contains visual, audio and graphics to make it more attractive and effective
as a platform of information sharing. In modern times, more people were concerns about health awareness, health care
and getting rid of harmful diseases. Modern lifestyle such as lack of exercise, unhealthy diet, alcohol consumption
and do not take care of exposing them to the threat of diseases such as hypertension, diabetes, heart attacks and other
fatal diseases.

Aware of this threat, the public is beginning to find a solution and a way out in order to ensure improved health
and well-optimal health living. Along with the advancement of information and communication technology, access to
information on health is becoming increasingly easy and fast. Sophisticated devices such as smartphones and tablature
with internet access invented to facilitate access to the information through Facebook. The tendency for people to find
information through the use of Facebook is due to the trend of Facebook's own popular other features that make it
easier and interactive to make an interaction with practitioners directly and personally. It is also portable and easy to
access anywhere. In terms of information sharing, the sharing of health-related via Facebook appears to be more
effective in terms of time, cost and effectiveness of health communication itself.

Based on the analysis of the page, there is a wealth of information in an attractive form presented in order to provide
a clear health messages to consumers. Here between the substances of the health-related page: i) Profile of the
organization, ii) Profile of the medical practitioners, iii) Point of view, iv) Advice, v) Awareness, vi) Preventive
measures, vii) Healthy lifestyle, viii) Balanced diet, viii) Health tips, x) Health-related partnership, xi) Interaction
with experts, xii) Informative video content, xiii) Infographic, xiv) Audio-visual.

This content enable user to obtain health-related information in a comprehensive yet fun approach. The latest
information about health and get feedback from medical practitioners with interactive. Health communication method
is proven to be more effective than the conventional method in which the service is quite limited and is not interactive.
In addition, users also share problems, concerns and their curiosity with medical practitioners and other Facebook
users. According to Sheldon (2008) and Ishii (2008) in Bahiyah et al., (2013), the use of Facebook among other motive
is to maintain the relationship, taking the time, join virtual communities, entertaining, making friends and finding
information. The motive of using Facebook was to coincide with the use of Facebook in the success of health
communication by organizations, medical practitioners, patients and the public.

2.4. Facebook and health information

As one of the popular social networking sites and become a trend nowadays, Facebook became the belief of many
to relate to the world for the purpose of obtaining information, create and maintain a network with other people and
socializing and entertainment. In its role to spread information, Facebook became the choice of many in search of
information. It contains visual, audio and graphics to make it more attractive and effective as a platform of information
sharing. In modern times, more people were concerns about health awareness, health care and getting rid of harmful
diseases. Modern lifestyle such as lack of exercise, unhealthy diet, alcohol consumption and do not take care of
exposing them to the threat of diseases such as hypertension, diabetes, heart attacks and other fatal diseases.
Aware of this threat, the public is beginning to find a solution and a way out in order to ensure improved health and well-optimal health living. Along with the advancement of information and communication technology, access to information on health is becoming increasingly easy and fast. Sophisticated devices such as smartphones and tablature with internet access invented to facilitate access to the information through Facebook. The tendency for people to find information through the use of Facebook is due to the trend of Facebook's own popular other features that make it easier and interactive to make an interaction with practitioners directly and personally. It is also portable and easy to access anywhere. In terms of information sharing, the sharing of health-related via Facebook appears to be more effective in terms of time, cost and effectiveness of health communication itself.

2.5. Facebook and health communication: The potential

Based on previous research, social media refers to activities among users that gathered through online and share information using interactive media to facilitate the creation and sharing of content in the form of words, pictures, video and audio (Safko & Brake, 2009). Sterne (2010) categorized social media as follows: message and forum platform, highlights and opinion sharing, social networks, blogs and microblogs, virtual bookmarks and media sharing. According to Korda and Itani (2011), however, social media can be an effective platform and extensive coverage as well as interactive that allows users to connect based on their desire. Furthermore, it is also seen as having its own potential in health communication branch. Social media moves so fast (Gupta, Tyagi, & Sharma, 2013), the platform is seen as able to be used in a variety of health conditions like to promote vaccination of children, the consequences of smoking and consumption of alcohol at a young age, unhealthy sexual practices and healthy diet among teens.

In health communication, Facebook is not only used by one person, it is also used by organizations and individuals to keep in touch with the world. For example the Ministry of Health Malaysia, National Cancer Society, the National Heart Institute, Childhood Cancer Support Group PPUKM The Gentle Birthing Group Malaysia, Malaysia Eczema, Our unvaccinated Healthy Babies, Everyday Health, Daily Health Tips, PreventDisease.com, Mayo Clinic, Dr. Mehmet Oz (Physician), Dr Suriakhatun (Homeopathic Physicians), Dr Zulkiifli Sharif (Islamic Medicine), Dr Hamid Arshat (gynecologist), Dr Harlina Halizah Siraj (Specialist Gynaecology) and many more. The use of Facebook is meant to provide health-related information, spread the word and alert, give solutions and treatment of disease, interacting with patients and consumers, as well as help in reducing the risk of infection.

2.6. Health communication through The IMB Skills Model view

Information, Motivation and Behavioural Skills Model – IMB Skills Model (Fisher & Fisher, 1992) is a model used to describe the attitude of prevention; one must have information that can be easily translated into a form of action, are motivated to act and skills to shape attitudes. In another sense this model can be translated to; i) Information: related to preventive behaviour might be useful to someone, ii) Motivation: personal attitudes, social support and perceptions of exposure and iii) Behavioural Skills: ability to objectively and self-efficacy significantly. This model is more adapted to the studies of HIV (Fisher & Fisher, 1996; Fisher, Fisher, Williams & Malloy, 1994; W.Fisher & Fisher, 1993; Misovich, Fisher & Fisher, 1996; Misovich, Fisher & Fisher, 1998; Murray, 2000, Williams et al., 1998), breast self-examination (Fisher et al., 2000) and motorcycle safety (Murray, 2000). This model serves to interpret purpose of information that can be translated into action that can motivate individuals and eventually able to made up their attitudes and behaviours.

In the context of health communication through Facebook, various health-related information is shared through the pages and groups which are administered by organizations and practitioners. This information is intended specifically to educate the public, to educate, empower and to spread the knowledge of health care concerns. This information is needed, especially for the less health-related knowledge and additional knowledge for those who are concerned about health. Through Facebook, this information can be accessed easily and it is constantly updated according to the quick passage of time. Providing examples of information related to nutrition and health care with the veracious methods can help in avoiding chronic diseases such as hypertension, diabetes, heart attack and impairment of internal organs.
Individuals receiving the information and definitely undoubtedly be more motivated and more positive. The information shared will be translated into a form of thinking that motivated the formation and shaping of positivity. This is certainly successful in reducing anxiety and able to handle fear, stress and negative thoughts if facing with any health problems. For instance, individuals who have cancer, based on the information available with regards to cancer can be helpful in providing alternative healing methods and moral support to other individuals. Motivation is needed to keep the strength, especially to patients with chronic diseases such as cancer and heart disease, while motivation is also required to healthy individuals to remain positive and motivated to continue to maintaining their good health.

Information and motivation will form the behaviour and attitudes towards health. Health information helps developing positive motivation and ultimately translated into a form of behaviour and a positive attitude. Behaviour and a positive attitude can be translated into a form of health care such as physical exercise, eating healthy foods, balanced diet and appropriate nutrition, positive thinking, managing stress properly and mental health concern. Individual will start cognizant on health care and taking necessary action like performing medical check-up on a regular basis and will start sharing health information with others. Behaviour and attitude helps in evading from health problems and avoid dangerous diseases.

2.7. Potential of Facebook in health communication

Demonstrating the functional and effective role in information sharing, social media and Facebook in particular, can benefit more than just simply a platform for the dissemination of information. Social media in healthcare should be further explored by looking at the function of Facebook as an evaluation tool for hospital services to connect with a community in hospitals.

The use of social media especially Facebook in health communication is relatively new in some developing countries, and its use has not been widespread. But there is a potential that can be explored. Social media as a tool for health communication is reasonable. The health providers, medical practitioners and health can use Facebook to form a network of virtual communities in their organization. Direct contact with patients can be done without any limitation of time and place. Health advice, nutrition, health screening time, prescription schedule, taking medications, Follow-up with patients and various services can be implemented only at the fingertips. This can certainly save a lot of time and cost, while ensuring patient satisfaction and customer are always satisfying.

Not only communication in hospitals, social networks can be extended to include large virtual communities. Organizations and health practitioners can connect with the community in order to provide health education and provide advice and expertise. This virtual community can certainly help make a healthier society and concerned about health care.

3. Conclusion & Opinion

Facebook becoming a very popular trend and widely used for various applications, especially in search to knowledge and current affairs. Individuals will become more open and more likely to increase their knowledge. In the context of nourishing healthcare information, Facebook will be a great tool in search of health-related knowledge. The user will be able to communicate with healthcare provider without time and location boundaries. Healthcare provider will benefit the enriching multimedia content in Facebook with fascinating narration, text, graphics, sound and video presentation. The healthcare provider, healthcare centre, hospital and clinic should benefit the advance technology in health communication and get it promoted broadly.

Consequently, the use of social media in health communication also helps in substituting conventional method which is limited health communication broadcast and less popular among the masses. The use of social media for health communication can help in providing a better understanding of the people related to health care and avoid the threat of diseases. IMB Skills Model can be used as a measuring tool to distinguish the information flow that can motivate and eventually form a behavioural skills and attitudes that help in creating awareness of the dangers of the disease. Along with the development of communications, changes in health communication from the conventional
method to a very interactive manner certainly help in creating a society that care for health. The tendency to seek health information also will upsurge as it very easy, fast and exciting.

References


