

Middle Eastern Nurses and Partners in Caring Science Conference
Abstract Title: Expanding Care and Transcending Borders Through Social Media
Authored by: Jessica Wilson
Email: jessicajwilson@gmail.com
Phone: +972 58-5920854
Affiliation: Ziv Medical Center, Department of Surgery; Safed, Israel

Background:

The rise of social media and networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter have completely transformed the way that patients seek psychosocial support during an illness. Online communities provide an added dimension of care and give patients a way to communicate with those who know their illness the best—other patients with the same condition.

Practice Change:

Healthcare providers should always be aware of and inform patients of resources that may be available to them. Traditionally these resources have included governmental and non-profit social services organizations in the local community. Now, the list of available resources should include online communities, where patients can communicate with others who have a similar diagnosis.

Validation:

The internet is the main initial source of health information for people from wealthier countries, and the use of the internet is low and middle-income countries is increasing at a rapid rate. In addition to researching basic information about their condition, patients now seek out information from other individuals who have also been diagnosed with the same illnesses, received the same treatments, and suffered from similar side effects. This greatly expands the psychosocial care that the patients receive.

Recommendations:

- Healthcare providers should be familiar with the basics of major social networking sites that their patients may use.
- Providers should encourage patients to find online communities relevant to their illness.
- Providers should discuss with patients the pros and cons of personal identification versus anonymity when discussing their condition online.

Conclusions:

Online communities can be a huge source of support for patients, and also for their caretakers. Because patients come together from all over the world to discuss their illnesses and treatments, many who cannot access local support have a source of care. These online communities are particularly important for patients with less common conditions, who may not be able to find sources of support nearby.

References:

Beusterien K, Tsay S, Gholizadeh S, Su Y. Real-world experience with colorectal cancer chemotherapies: patient web forum analysis. *Ecancelmedalscience*. 2013 Oct 10;7:361.

Van de Belt TH, Engelen LJ, Berben SA, Teerenstra S, Samsom M, Schoonhoven L. Internet and social media for health-related information and communication in health care: preferences of the Dutch general population. *J Med Internet Res*. 2013 Oct 2;15(10):e220.