

139 MOVING WITH THE TIMES: SOCIAL MEDIA USE AMONGST LUPUS PATIENTS

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Background: Over the last decade the use of social media has been almost exponential. There are now multiple online platforms where patients can interact for support and information gathering. We sought to discover current usage of social media amongst an ethnically mixed population of lupus patients attending an inner city tertiary lupus centre.

Methods: Questionnaires were distributed to consecutive patients attending a tertiary lupus centre between October 2016 and February 2017. There were a total of 17 questions gathering information on patient demographics and patient use of online information and support services, particularly investigating their usage of social media platforms with regards to lupus.

Results: Eighty-four completed questionnaires were returned. The majority of respondents were female (83%) and most (60%) were aged between 26 and 45 years. 28 were South Asian, 26 Caucasian and 24 Black with two of other ethnic groups and two of mixed race. Sixty-four percent (n = 54) of patients accessed online lupus information and support sites. Forty-five percent (n = 38) of patients reported using social media sites (26% South Asians, 34% Blacks and 34% Whites). Of those using social media 22% (n = 8) patients used these tools daily and 30% (n = 11) reported weekly use. Facebook (n = 20), blogs (n = 9), Youtube (n = 9), and Instagram (n = 7) were cited as the most frequently used applications in descending order of frequency. Most patients (n = 30) sought information on the disease, 17 (45%) wanted to find out about new treatments for lupus, 16 (42%) sought new ways to self manage their disease, 14 (37%) sought interactions with other patients, and 10 (26%) were seeking support online. Patients most commonly wanted information on skin and joint complaints and family planning. Sixty-six percent (n = 56) of patients thought their rheumatology team should have an online social media application to communicate with their patients.

Conclusion: A significant proportion of our lupus patients (45%) use social media to access information and support for their disease. Facebook, blogs, Instagram and Youtube are commonly used. Social media applications can provide physicians with a tool to interact with lupus patients to improve accessibility to health care and better health outcomes.

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