

eHealth, Social Media and Chronic Disease Management

The Patient Perspective

People are turning to the web to help them manage chronic health conditions.

They're blogging; they're on Facebook and YouTube. They're sharing on sites like Diabetic Connect and Diabetes Care Community. They're using electronic reminders and recording their health data.

eHealth

eHealth is the use of information technology in health. It helps bridge the gap between the support people need and what their families and health care team can provide. As Evans (2012) says, over two-thirds of care happens at home.

Benefits

Social support is important for health outcomes. Social media can provide (Greene et al., 2010; Wright, 2009):

- Emotional support;
- Safe places to vent;
- Information and resources available anytime;
- A community of people who have the same concerns and issues that others don't share and may not understand;
- The opportunity to help someone out - reciprocity has health benefits.

On Social Media (Wright, 2009):

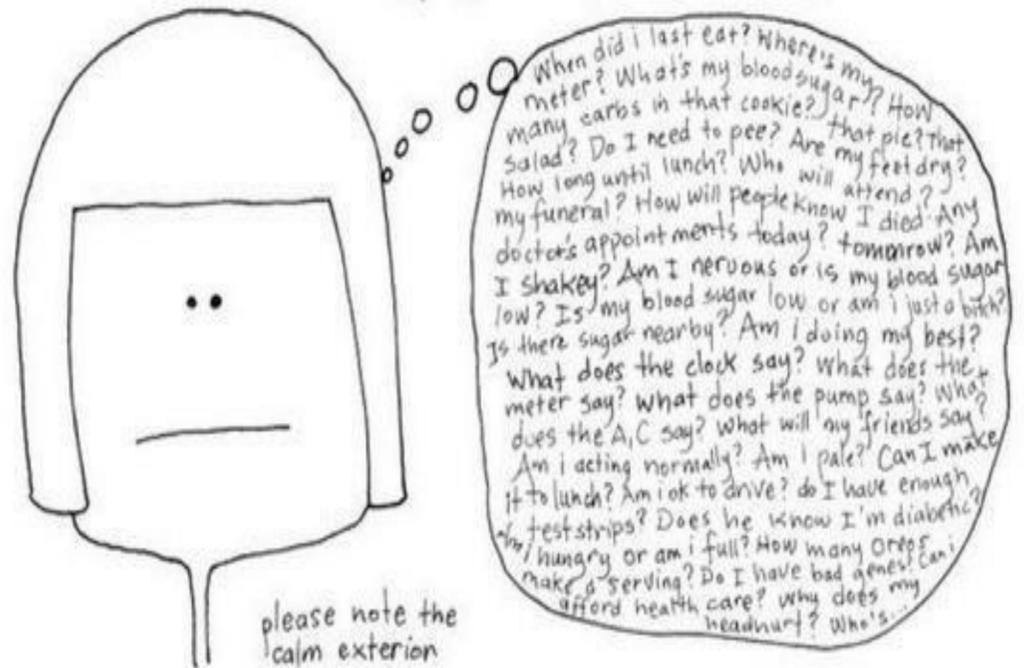
- People self edit before posting and project an idealized self, leading to less negative self talk;
- Back and forth communication provides a feedback loop that intensifies positive reinforcement;
- Writing things down allows people to distance themselves from their feelings and gain perspective.

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what goes on in a diabetic's head:



Ten Tips for Patients (and Clinicians) Going Online

1. Inform yourself about what's available online.
2. Try different applications.
3. Find a site that's checked by health professionals and community moderators.
4. Find a site that allows you to post with a user name.
5. Find out who is giving advice.
6. Find out who owns the site.
7. Check with your health team before making changes to your treatment plan.
8. Read the privacy policies on sites before you join a site.
9. Use Facebook pages as an information source, not an online community.
10. And finally, participate.



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