

Editorial

Internet and Information Technology Use in Diabetes Education

Da Silva E*

Group of Studies and Research on Diabetes, Department of Basic Sciences, Federal University of Jequitinhonha and Mucuri Valleys (UFVJM), Brazil

***Corresponding author:** Edson da Silva, Group of Studies and Research on Diabetes, Department of Basic Sciences, Federal University of Jequitinhonha and Mucuri Valleys (UFVJM), Diamantina, Minas Gerais, Brazil

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The Internet is a prosperous way to share teachings, opinions and experiences. Within the dynamics of health care, health professionals are not the only sources of health information for their patients. Online health information resources and involvement with health represent informal education and support that can complement the more formal education that people with diabetes receive from health professionals during visits to doctors' offices [1]. Recent estimates suggest that 83% of Internet users with chronic conditions, such as diabetes, are online to look for health information. People with diabetes seek online information about a health condition, treatment options, tools for daily diabetes control, support and scientific findings [2]. Online healthcare engagement features include numerous social networking tools and platforms such as blogs, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and other online community sites that allow the sharing of active and bidirectional information [1].

In this scenario, the Internet and Information Technology (IT) offer new opportunities for diabetes education, and this technology is becoming increasingly important in the daily lives of patients and health professionals [3]. Diabetes Online Community (DOC) is a widely used English term that covers all people who engage in various online activities related to life with diabetes. DOC allows people to interact through diverse platforms on the internet, including forums in online communities; blogs, videos, podcasts, applications and social networks, among the most well-known are Facebook, Twitter [4] and YouTube. The range of participants in DOC activities and platforms has been growing rapidly.

The Internet provides opportunities to strengthen communication and support among individuals with diabetes, their families, managers, industry and healthcare providers, and the general public [4]. However, websites vary considerably with regard to the quality and authenticity of their content, which can be a risk for patients with diabetes and even for students or out-of-date healthcare professionals, because they may be unable to identify the little useful content to update on any topic, especially about health and diabetes. In addition, patients may be confused by the amount of information and the number of technologies available for diabetes education,

which may lead to disappointment and discontinuation of any action in the diabetes self-management process [3]. Self-promotion activities, collecting personal data from social media users, false promise ads, and pornographic content are common risks in online interactions. Such risks must be severely tackled by all of us, whether we are patients or educators in diabetes. Only then can we appreciate the many benefits of the internet and social networks as alternatives to online diabetes education [3].

To disseminate current and secure content to its Internet users, major diabetes organizations around the world (including the International Diabetes Federation, the American Diabetes Association, the European Association for the Study of Diabetes and the Brazilian Diabetes Society), have developed educational content and have been using their own websites and social networks as tools to promote Online Diabetes Education [5-9]. This type of content is designed to educate patients and healthcare professionals. In addition, different materials and virtual tools are available to users with innovative features that favor the treatment and self-management of diabetes. These types of educational content are produced by professionals specialized in the area of diabetes care and can be downloaded and / or shared in social networks with complete security as to the authenticity of the information [3].

The Internet has boosted the diversity and multiplicity of information, as well as enabling people in general to publish and share information, and thus has become a vast and chaotic reservoir of content [10]. In this context, the YouTube platform is one of many communication tools available on the Internet and presents data of great potential to be analyzed in the field of scientific research [10,11]. We can perceive the potential of use of video as a useful tool for the health educator. But despite growing research on using YouTube as a useful source of information about specific diseases, few studies have evaluated the content of diabetes mellitus videos [12]. Research is necessary to understand the importance of using the Internet and IT in self-management of disease, quality of life and glycemic control, as well as designing and evaluating strategies to maximize their positive impact on the daily life of all People involved with diabetes, especially the patient, their relatives and health professionals.

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