

Public Abstract

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Title:Engagement in online health communities: Expressed attitudes and self-efficacy of arthritis self-management

The purpose of this research is to examine the computer-mediated communication within online health communities to understand the role engagement plays in eHealth literacy and the perceived benefits, perceived barriers, and expressed feelings of self-efficacy toward self-management behaviors of people with arthritis. This study used two methods: content analysis, and concurrent ethnomethodology. A four constructed-week sample was collected from four online health communities for the content analysis (N=1,960), and more than 6,500 archived posts were examined ethnomethodologically. The results indicated that online health communities facilitate self-management behaviors through the exchange of health information and/or disease experience. These online health communities act as informal self-management programs led by peers with the same chronic disease through the exchange of health information based on experience, working to improve members' health literacy related to arthritis. Online health communities provide opportunities for health behavior change messages to educate and persuade regarding arthritis self-management behaviors.