

# **Social Media and It's Implication in Health Care: A Literature Review**

**Dwight Mahaputera Marulitua Hutapea<sup>1</sup>, Kimberley Maharani Maulibung Hutapea<sup>2</sup>**

*Universitas Prima Indonesia, Medan*

*Email: dwightmahaputeramarulituahutapea@unprimdn.ac.id*

## **ABSTRACT**

Social media is a platform to be shared with the public and identify different effects on patients. For example, their autonomy by complementing the information provided by health care to provide psychosocial support, and improve service delivery. Social media have effects on both patients and the wider health care system. Therefore, it is important to identify its implications for the healthcare system. This paper reviews the literature and briefs about social media and its implications in health care. This literature review is synthesized based on empirical evidence derived from the research literature from 2017-2023 and consists of 14 relevant articles from various online databases such as ScienceDirect, PUBMED, CINAHL, and Allied Health Literature. Social media is spreading across healthcare it increases patient awareness and satisfaction, which helps in improving the effectiveness of communication and satisfaction. Social media is mainly for social support, emotional support, esteem support, and network support. The implication of social media use by patients was also to affect the healthcare and patient's relationships by stimulating equal communication between the patient and healthcare, shorter relationships, increased switching healthcare, harmonious relationship, and suboptimal interaction between the patient and healthcare.

**Keywords: social media, healthcare, implication**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Due to its strong consumer edge, temporality, and high accessibility, social media is a platform that is essentially meant to be shared with the public and appears to be the next big thing in healthcare technology (Kanchan & Gaidhane, 2023). There are numerous social media sites in the current information technology era. Social networking sites are the term for these platforms (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, Snapchat, etc). Facebook is the most widely used social media platform online, with 2.1 billion users 1.4 million of whom are active, and is the most popular social networking site (Rahman & Ahmed, 2018).

Moreover, more than 90% of active Facebook user accounts used a tablet or smartphone to access the social media network. On Facebook 510.00, 136.000 photographs are uploaded, 293.000 status updates are made, and comments are written every minute (Biolcati et al., 2018). Facebook is the most widely used social media platform in healthcare settings, but other platforms could be more effective depending on the patient population's age range (Marsh et al., 2021). Surveys show that physicians use 2-4 hours of professional-leaning networking sites

per week, with 44% using Sermo and 42% using LinkedIn. They also participate in popular sites like YouTube, blogging, and Twitter, with guidelines available for their professional use (Barreto & Whitehair, 2017).

Earlier research on social media use in healthcare revealed varying consequences associated with patient use of social media. Promoting health on social media is a crucial aspect of health communication since it entails trying to get people to alter their behavior. It is typically more difficult to accomplish change on health-related themes using social media health promotion (Ghahramani et al., 2022). The study by Khan and Loh (2022) identified barriers to social media usage among healthcare professionals, including inefficiency, privacy concerns, poor information quality, lack of trust, and blurred professional boundaries, and found peer influence and supporting conditions as determinants.

Nursing's importance in healthcare systems will persist in the future, but it must adapt to digitally enabled societies and patients to maintain its relevance and compassionate care (Booth et al., 2021). As a result, it is still unknown how social media may affect healthcare in terms of behavior modification. Consequently, the purpose of this study is to summarise the relevant material and offer a concise overview of social media's impact on healthcare. As a result, the review will aid in improving knowledge of social media's role in healthcare. Extraction of general conclusions from the research is another benefit of this kind of review. Healthcare professionals can use this information to their benefit and that of other patients by learning about the implications of patients' use of social media.

## **METHODS**

### **Search Strategy**

This literature review is synthesized based on empirical evidence derived from the research literature from 2008-2017 and consists of 14 relevant articles from various online databases such as ScienceDirect, PUBMED, CINAHL, and Allied Health Literature.

The literature review involves data collection through reading, recording, and processing research materials. It focuses on interactive learning through social media, providing insights into its implications in health care, and explores various relevant journals and information sources.

Detailed searching terms for the literature review using the PICO method; population, intervention, comparison, and outcome.

### **Population**

The populations in the study consisted of health care. Doctors and nurses are increasingly using social media platforms to communicate with patients, inform them about treatment developments, respond to disease inquiries, or provide guidance or reminders.

### **Intervention**

Intervention in this study consists of implications of social media.

### **Comparison**

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### **Outcome**

Social media has an impact on health care. Social media can enhance innovation, research collaboration, and health outcomes by monitoring patient care and wellness.

## **RESULTS**

The total number of these studies included in the literature review based on the data selection criteria was 14 studies. All studies have shown that the impact of social media provides a variety of health content through internet association. The utilization of information and communication technology through social media continues to expand worldwide including in nursing. It is realized that social media can be a powerful tool for educating, communicating, and influencing (Punjani et al., 2015). Promoting health on social media is a crucial aspect of health communication since it entails trying to get people to alter their behavior. It is typically more difficult to accomplish change on health-related themes using social media health promotion (Ghahramani et al., 2022).

Another example of social media in health care involves harnessing the knowledge and skills of a community to solve problems or to gather information and opinions. Social media can also used to connect health care in third-world countries with specialists in more medically advanced locations for example, surgical procedures can be streamed via the internet and questions can be asked via Twitter, Instagram, or Facebook in real time. Social media provides a new communication channel for healthcare to network professionally share and exchange medical information in ways and at a pace that was never before possible (Gamache-O'leary & Grant, 2017).

This paper aims to evaluate the research and provide a briefing regarding social media and its relevance in health care. As a result, the effect of social media on health care is still unknown in terms of modifying health behavior. The review will aid in improving knowledge of social

media's impact on healthcare. It is also possible to glean broad conclusions from the studies using this kind of review. Medical professionals can benefit from these discoveries regarding the implications of patients' usage of social media, impart this knowledge to other patients, and utilize it for their benefit.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **The Importance of Social Media in Health Care**

Social media offers the healthcare industry a platform for information sharing, policy and practice debate, health behavior promotion, community engagement, and patient, carer, student, and colleague education and interaction. Social media can be used by healthcare professionals to potentially enhance patient motivation, build a professional network, raise personal awareness of news and breakthroughs, and enlighten the public about health issues (Chen & Wang, 2021).

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### **The Benefits of Social Media in Health Care**

*Professional networking.* Social media is a popular platform for healthcare professionals to engage in online communities, listen to classes, and create class hashtags to share resources like videos, websites, articles, and photographs. Social media and social networking in health care evolved and matured over time with many forms of participation and contributions from the different stakeholders within health care. Broadly, social media has been used in health care as a communication platform to inform, educate, and promote knowledge exchange among the different participants within health care (O'Brien et al., 2016).

*Social media use for health awareness.* Educational institutions are increasingly focusing on the use of social media for health awareness, as studies show that it effectively disseminates information among patients, highlighting the growing importance of this approach in healthcare. According to a recent study by Shrivastava et al. (2024), medical trainees can be effectively engaged by using Facebook and Twitter as supplemental platforms for educational

material delivery. The study by Giroux and Moreau (2022) found that 89% of 291 participants in a continuing medical education course who were asked said they used social media, with Facebook and YouTube being the most popular platforms. For instance, to better inform patients, nursing students are now encouraged to produce YouTube videos that last three to five minutes and share them on multiple social media sites, rather than just creating flyers and pamphlets.

*Professional education.* The communication capabilities provided by social media are also being used to improve clinical education. The high usage rate of social media has motivated the adoption of clinical curricula to reflect the changing habits and culture of incoming students. Nowadays, Universities are also using social media to recruit students, increase access to academic libraries, create virtual classrooms and office hours, and other unique learning experiences (Ventola, 2014).

*Patient care.* Nurses find social media useful for information dissemination, professional development, and referral networks. They find it easy to navigate, clear, and understandable, resulting in a favorable attitude towards its use (Gamor et al., 2023). Healthcare uses social media for direct patient care, and this practice is slowly being accepted by clinicians and healthcare facilities (Ventola, 2014).

### **Implication of Social Media Within Health Care**

The use of social media within health care by health professionals to deliver patient care has garnered much debate over the past few years since the creation and viral expansion of multiple online social media sites. Social media offers a platform for patients and their families to discuss medical conditions, share experiences, and educate others with similar conditions, outside of healthcare providers' reach (Singh et al., 2016). People who live with a condition have a platform to share their own stories, ask questions, and get immediate responses through social media. Support groups have found a new venue for organization thanks to social media as patients and family carers interact with one another, share their experiences, and look for online solace (Nikzad-Terhune et al., 2015).

Social media is beneficial in advancing subspecialties of cardiology, with leaders in general cardiology, cardio-oncology, and cardio-obstetrics utilizing strategies to address health disparities in female populations and racial/ethnic minorities (Goodman et al., 2022). The rise in social media usage among pediatric dentists highlights its growing influence on the profession, emphasizing its importance in dental education and healthcare (Dhar, 2018).

*Types of social media use by patients for health.* Types of social media use by patients are intended to meet an unfulfilled need. Categories represent social support, emotional support, esteem support, informational support, and network support (Smailhodzic et al., 2016).

*Social support.* Social media and social support refer to various aspects of social interactions, including systems that protect individuals from stress. Strong social support networks protect against psychosocial and physical impairment, while weak networks are linked to depression, neurosis, and mortality. The available social media and nearby individuals assist, making social support crucial for overall well-being (Yue et al., 2024).

*Emotional support.* Emotional support is defined as communication that meets an individual's emotional or affective needs. It refers to support gained through the expression of care and concern, which serve to improve an individual's mood. Emotional support helps the patient to meet their emotional or affective needs (Smailhodzic et al., 2016).

*Esteem support.* The study suggests that responsive esteem support and perceived partner responsiveness can create a conducive environment for exchanging esteem support in interpersonal relationships (Holmstrom & Lim, 2023). The study supports the idea that provider-patient interaction leads to improved patient health, with emotional and esteem social support messages playing a crucial role (Robinson et al., 2019).

*Information support.* Information support refers to communication that offers helpful or necessary information. Patients who have been diagnosed, in particular, require a great deal of information regarding their condition and available treatments. Patients who have lived with the condition for a longer period can provide this information (Smailhodzic et al., 2016).

*Network support.* The size of the instrumental network support significantly impacts all perceived social support subdimensions (Bi et al., 2022). The study Interventions that encourage engagement with existing network members during treatment and extend these networks post-treatment are likely to be beneficial (Vassilev et al., 2023).

### **The Effect of Social Media on the Healthcare**

Social media impacts healthcare by increasing communication between patients and professionals, increasing doctor switching, fostering harmonious relationships, and potentially causing suboptimal interaction between patients and healthcare providers. The study by Zakkar et al. (2022) highlights the potential negative impacts of social media policies in healthcare and advocates for policy and cultural changes to create secure platforms for healthcare provider-patient interaction without legal or privacy risks.

*More equal communication between patients and health care.* Patients can learn more about available treatments and improve their ability to connect with healthcare providers by using the information from social media platforms to gain a better understanding of their illness. Patients may therefore have a more relaxed relationship with their healthcare provider. Because they are better informed about their disease and know what questions to ask, patients feel more prepared for appointments. Additionally, social media gives people the chance to learn more and communicate about health issues, which could encourage people to seek medical assistance more frequently (Lee & Wu, 2014).

*Increased switching healthcare.* Social media effect can lead to shorter relationships between healthcare and patients. Patients may change health care due to online discussions about negative reactions to the patient's treatment (Smailhodzic et al., 2016).

*Harmonious relationship.* On the other hand, social media empowers individual users to comply with healthcare recommendations as a group, which affects healthcare-patient relationships by potentially reducing discussions during clinical interactions as patients stick to the recommended treatment (Hickmann et al., 2022).

*Suboptimal interaction between the patient and healthcare.* As patients use social media for health reasons, this can affect the patient and healthcare relationship by leading to suboptimal interaction between the patient and healthcare. When patients bring social media content to the consultation, this can lead to increased processes of sorting information, transforming the potential risk to the healthcare and challenging the healthcare expertise. Additionally, if the healthcare reacts negatively to what the patient learned from social media, this might decrease the patient's subjective well-being (Rupert et al., 2014).

*Relationship between effects on patients and effects on the patient's healthcare relationship.* Patients' empowerment in healthcare leads to increased confidence, active participation in clinical interactions, and increased responsibility for their condition. Social media can empower patients by giving them access to information and opportunities for discussion, which increases the patient's involvement in clinical interaction (Lin & Kishore, 2021). Finally, the patient's empowerment increases the ability of patients to communicate with healthcare (Hickmann et al., 2022).

*The use of social media for nursing.* Social media can be a powerful tool for disseminating information and promoting health, especially in education, practice, and research. It can reach diverse nurses, promote culturally competent care, and facilitate engagement with healthcare

professionals and patients. Blogs and Twitter have been known as useful tools through which nurses interact with others, share work experiences, and distribute knowledge they gained from lessons in research, education, or service (O'Connor et al., 2021). Also, Twitter was used effectively during the 2009 pandemic flu to predict and track disease outbreaks by analyzing message contents (Singh & Singh, 2021). Social media have revolutionized how people communicate and share information.

Social media is spreading across healthcare it increases patient awareness and satisfaction, which helps in improving the effectiveness of communication and satisfaction. Social media is mainly for social support, emotional support, esteem support, and network support. Social media use by patients is emotional expression and social comparison was found to most commonly lead patients to empowerment. Other implication of social media was diminished subjective well-being, addiction to social media, being targeted for promotion, and loss of privacy. Another implication of social media use by patients is to affect healthcare and patient relationships by stimulating equal communication between the patient and healthcare, shorter relationships, increased switching healthcare, harmonious relationships, and suboptimal interaction between the patient and healthcare. Social media is to have a significant impact on the future of health care. Nurses may use social media differently depending on the purposes they have, such as for professional development, and engagement with patients.

## **LIMITATION**

This literature review focuses only on social media and its implication on healthcare, this is too broad, and it would be much better if the literature review focused on more specific settings like hospital settings. Further research is expected to be able to discuss more in the hospital setting.

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