

Doctors' access and dissemination of medical information through social media

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Abstract

Aim: The purpose of the study was to analyze the way in which doctors, in contract with the Health Insurance House in Romania use social media (SM) in accessing and disseminating medical information. *Material and method:* Family doctors and dentists who during the year 2017 had a contract with the Romanian National Health Insurance House represented the targeted sample. 8,497 e-mail addresses and 5,422 telephone numbers were identified and collected from the web page of the National Health Insurance House. The invitation to participate in the study (including the link to the online questionnaire) was sent by SMS, Whatsapp, and / or email during 24 May - 14 July 2017. The experimental design was cross-sectional. In the statistical analysis the following generations were defined: "Baby Boomers", aged between 51-70 years, Generation X as people aged 38-51 and Millennials under 38 years. *Results:* One hundred and twenty valid questionnaires were analyzed. The profile of the respondent was women (61%), from urban (71%), specialist physician (50%) working in privat practice (70%). The majority of respondents use Facebook (85%). Generation X connect more to SM from public places as compared to Baby Boomers ($p=0.007$). Doctors seek medical information on SM monthly (83%) but rarely give advice through SM to colleagues (28%) or contribute to patients' medical education (32%). Most physicians interact with their patients through SM (59%), but do not discuss with them about how to search for health information. *Conclusion:* SM has a low usage among the doctors who perform their medical activity in Romania. As expected, age is a factor that determines the susceptibility of SM usage by Romanian doctors. SM is mainly used to search medical information but not contribute to patients' medical education.

Keywords:

Social Media (SM); Physician; Health Information