

PEOPLE'S ATTITUDE TO HEALTH ISSUES ON SOCIAL MEDIA

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Abstract

Today, our life is profoundly marked by the internet. We share and receive information, especially through social media. Expressing yourself on social media is a way of life for many people. Thoughts, ideas, news are easily spread regarding many subjects, including health issues. People get quickly involved in subjects regarding healthcare when they are published on social media (Facebook). Usually women are those who express their negative feelings or opinions regarding healthcare providers.

Key words: healthcare system, attitude, social media

INTRODUCTION

Across the health spectrum, the way that many now communicate more rapidly, access supplemental research data, and arm themselves with pertinent health information needed to manage their own health and those of others has been propelled by access to information via social media, coupled with the ubiquity of cellular devices. Social media has been responsible for relevant changes in both personal and community health, especially by making it easier for large numbers of people to rapidly share information. This has brought with it both strengths, such as the ability to have preventative and diagnostic/reactive information widely available, and challenges, such as the potential for misinformation to rapidly circulate without the involvement of health practitioners, institutions and organizations. (https://www.huffingtonpost.com/shannon-dosemagen-/how-social-media-is-shaki_b_9090102.html)

Social media can both help facilitate information sharing and be problematic in spreading rumors during normal (or seasonally expected) health events and health crises. Public health agencies and other organizations can use social media to disseminate time-sensitive health information, promote information sharing to encourage behavioral changes (including corrective changes during potential health crises), be a platform for conversation between agencies and constituents (rather than just as an information provider) and allow the public to provide useful information

and feedback. However, social media is a two-way street, and allows non-experts to share information just as rapidly as health agencies, if not more so. (<https://getreferralmd.com/2013/09/healthcare-social-media-statistics/>)

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Starting from the fact that there are many discussions regarding health and health care on social media, the aim of this study was to evaluate people's attitude toward health services, medical care and medical personnel – patient relationship, that were expressed on social media. Two problems were brought to discussions: improving doctor-patient relationship and the dissatisfaction of a mother whose child has suffered an allergic dermatitis. These issues were presented on Facebook, in a group that includes more than 39000 members from Oradea city, called “We are Oradea” (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/OradeaSuntemNoi/>)

All the answers were gathered and statistically analyzed, taking into account the number of participants, their gender, and their attitude regarding the health care system.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

There were 95 people engaged in the discussions and more than 550 reactions and remarks to the subjects mentioned above. Most of those who left a comment were angry or reacted against the public health system/ doctors/ nurses. (Fig. 1)

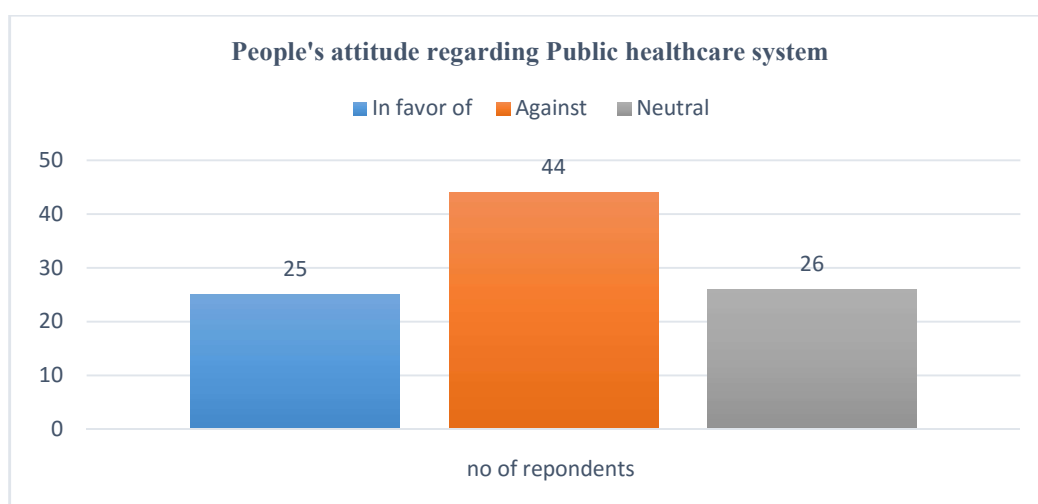


Fig. 1. People's attitude on social media regarding public healthcare system

There is an evident negative attitude regarding the public medical services from Oradea.

Studying the comments, there is obviously a supportive tendency for those who have a negative attitude, from the other members of the social media group, a few of them exposing their unpleasant personal experience, in the past, within the hospital. This is not a rare phenomenon; according to PWC 32% of US users post about their friends and family's health experiences on social media. According to Infographics Archive, 28% of health-related conversations on Facebook are supporting health-related causes, followed by 27% of people commenting about health experiences or updates. (<https://www.infographicsarchive.com/seo-social-media/infographic-healthcare-industry-building-trust-through-social-media/>). This statistic supports and highlights two common uses of Facebook related to your health like sharing your favorite cause or interacting with others recovering. Social media has penetrated our society very deeply to the point where it has become a place where we share our interests and give support to others. This could be one of the many factors affecting why many trust the information found on social media about healthcare. The masses are continually accepting social media as a part of their everyday life, it is time your healthcare facility incorporated this marketing medium as part of your culture as well.

More than 40% of consumers say that information found via social media affects the way they deal with their health (source: Mediabistro) The remarks, comments and attitude of other people on social media are often considered a trusted and reliable source of information, but they aren't always accurate and have a great dose of subjectivity. (<https://getreferralmd.com/2013/09/healthcare-social-media-statistics/>)

Also, 42% of individuals viewing health information on social media look at health-related consumer reviews, according to PWC. (<http://www.pwc.com>)

41% of people said social media would affect their choice of a specific doctor, hospital, or medical facility. This statistic shows that social media can be a vehicle to help scale both positive and negative word of mouth, which makes it an important channel for an individual or organization in the health care industry to focus on in order to attract and retain patients. Consumers are using social media to discuss everything in their lives including health and it is up to your organization to choose whether it's time to tune in.

(<http://thesparkreport.com/infographic-social-mobile-healthcare>)

From the total 95 people that commented, 33 were men (34.7%). They usually leave a single, longer comment, compared to women who comment more often, but in short phrases.

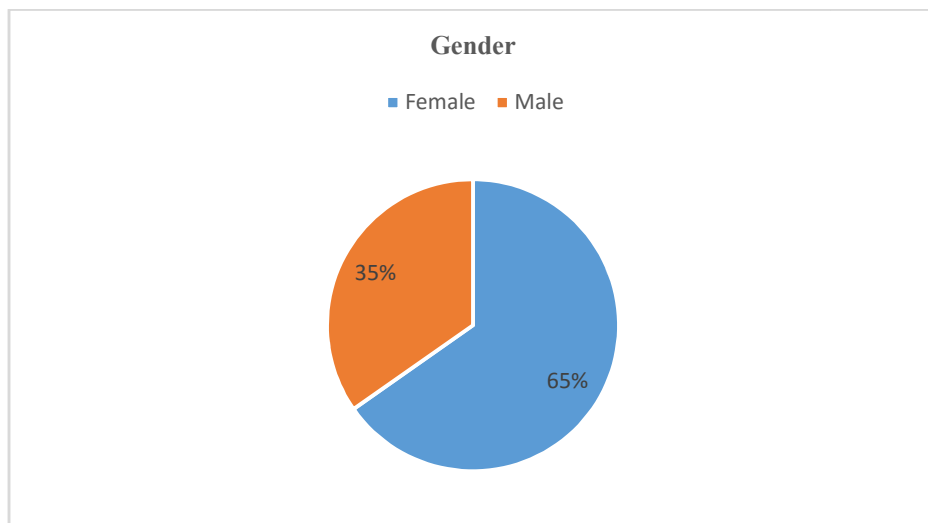


Fig. 2. Women vs men on social media

This result is in agreement with Pew Research Center's data: Internet users under 50 are particularly likely to use a social networking site of any kind, and those 18-29 are the most likely of any demographic cohort to do so (83%). Women are more likely than men to be on these sites. Even so, Perrin A. (2015) shows in his study that women were more likely than men to use social networking sites for a number of years, although since 2014 these differences have been modest. Today, 68% of all women use social media, compared with 62% of all men.

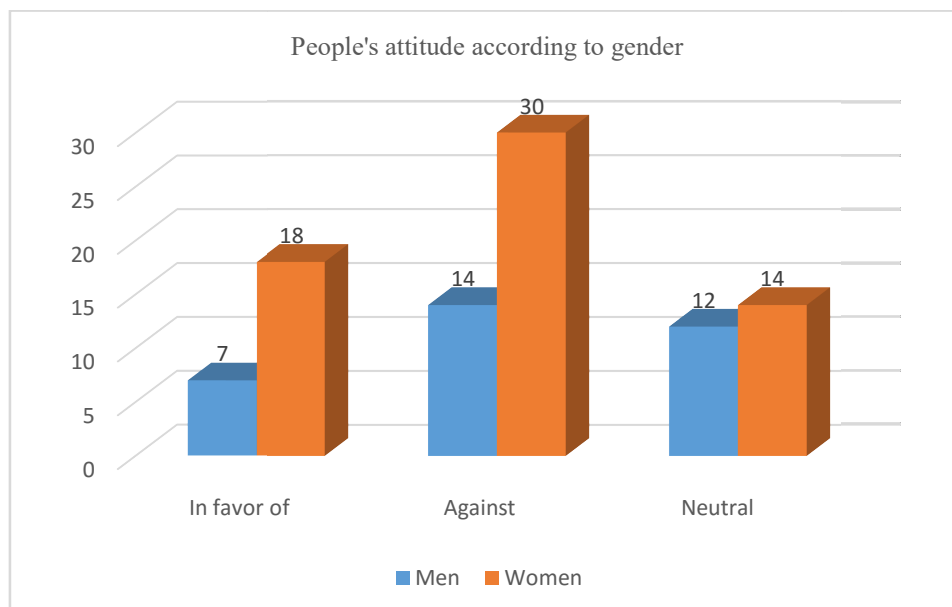


Fig. 3. How people react according to their gender

Men tend to be more conciliatory. (Fig. 3). 36.3% of men pose a neutral point of view, while women are against the healthcare system in a percentage of 48.3%, and only 22.5% are neutral. This situation may be explained by the fact that one of the debated subject was one of a mother's with a sick child, and women tend to empathize with this kind of situation. Another explanation is correlated to the social media group or community. If the context of a group or community online is high quality and curated, then many trust that crowd sourcing of information from other like mind individuals is reliable. This shows how people perceive the Internet to be beneficial for the exchange of relevant information, even about their health. (<https://getreferralmd.com/2013/09/healthcare-social-media-statistics/>)

CONCLUSIONS

- People tend to be very vocal on social media, especially when health problems are discussed. This topic gathered more than 500 reactions and comments in less than 24 hours.
- 46.3% of the comments revealed a negative attitude regarding the public healthcare system.
- Women are more active and tend to have an extreme position to a certain problem compared to men that in third of the cases are conciliatory.

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