



Comparison of Older Adults' Exposure to and Sharing of Health-Related Messages on Facebook by Chronic Condition Status



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Project Summary

- Digital health technology holds promise and may be especially important for older populations who often have an existing chronic condition or are at higher risk of diseases.
- Although Facebook is popular among older adults, health-related Facebook use among this demographic is understudied.

- The purpose of this study was to compare older adult Facebook users with and without a chronic health condition on their frequency of exposure to and posting health-related messages.

Methods

- Data were collected as part of a survey collecting anonymous data on demographic information, social behaviors (including alcohol and smoking use), and social media use.
- Participants, recruited via Qualtrics, were regular Facebook users and aged 50+ years. Chronic condition status was assessed via self-report.
- Participants were asked separately if they had *seen and posted or shared*: health-related information; about others'/their own health behaviors (e.g., exercise); and about others'/their own medical condition.
- Responses were dichotomized as "Rarely" or "At least once a month".
- Six logistic regression models, controlling for demographics and Facebook login frequency, were run to assess whether viewing and/or posting health-related messages differed by chronic condition status.

Results

Table 1: Sample Characteristics

Demographics	Overall (n=697)	Chronic Medical Condition (n=351)	No Chronic Medical Condition (n=346)	value
Age (Years)	61.17 (SD=7.9)	61.50 (7.8)	60.83 (8.0)	0.720
Female	543 (77.9)	270 (76.9)	273 (78.9)	0.477
Race				
Caucasion	613 (87.9)			
Other	84 (12.1)			
Hispanic/Latino origin	30 (4.3)	13 (3.7)	17 (4.9)	0.451
Education				
High School or less	168 (24.1)	84 (23.9)	84 (24.3)	0.405
Some college	307 (44.0)	164 (46.7)	143 (41.3)	
Bachelor's Degree or higher	222 (31.9)	103 (29.3)	119 (34.4)	
Marital Status				
Married	370 (53.1)	162 (46.2)	208 (60.1)	0.002
Divorced	151 (21.7)	91 (25.9)	60 (17.3)	
Single	176 (25.3)	98 (27.9)	78 (22.5)	
Employment Status				
Working Full full time	194 (27.8)	80 (22.8)	114 (32.9)	0.410
Working Part part time	72 (10.3)	32 (9.1)	40 (11.6)	
Retired	247 (35.4)	121 (34.5)	126 (36.4)	
Disabled	98 (14.1)	85 (24.2)	13 (3.8)	
Other	86 (12.4)	33 (9.4)	53 (15.3)	

Table 2: Logistic Regressions Predicting Seeing or Sharing Health-Related Messages on Facebook

	Seen Health Information				Seen Health Behaviors				Seen Medical Condition			
	OR	95% CI		p	OR	95% CI		p	OR	95% CI		p
Chronic Medical Condition (ref: no)	1.37	1.01	1.86	0.04	1.20	0.89	1.63	0.26	1.64	1.20	2.23	0.002
	Shared Health Information				Shared Health Behaviors				Shared Medical Condition			
	OR	95% CI		p	OR	95% CI		p	OR	95% CI		p
Chronic Medical Condition (ref: no)	1.52	1.03	2.24	0.04	1.48	0.96	2.28	0.07	1.93	1.16	3.21	0.01

Models controlled for age, gender, race, and Facebook login frequency.



Results

- Respondents (N=697; 77.9% female) were on average 61.17 (SD=7.9) years old and 87.9% were non-Hispanic White. One-half reported a chronic health condition (n=351; 50.4%). One-half reported a chronic health condition (n=351; 50.4%).
- In adjusted models, those with a chronic medical condition had a higher likelihood of seeing posts from others with health information (OR=1.37; 95% CI: 1.01, 1.86) and about others' medical conditions (OR=1.64; 95% CI: 1.20, 2.23) at least once a month in the past year to those with no chronic medical conditions. Similarly, those with a chronic medical condition had a higher likelihood of posting or sharing health information (OR=1.52; 95% CI: 1.03, 2.24) and about their medical condition (OR=1.93; 95% CI: 1.16, 3.21) at least once a month. People with and without chronic condition did not differ in terms of how often they saw others' post about health behaviors or did so themselves.

Discussion

- Older adults with chronic medical conditions are more likely than those without chronic condition to regularly see and share health information on Facebook.
- The accuracy of the health information shared should be explored.

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