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Web Portal for Health Disclosure: A Promising Future

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Abstract

This poster presents the idea of developing web portal for health disclosure in the future. Some preliminary data on disclosure behaviors by patients give some promising hope for the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) specifically for health disclosure in the coming future. A concept of web portal is also introduced in this poster.

Keywords:

Web Portal, disclosure, privacy, health information

Web Portal for health disclosure

A qualitative research [1] was conducted by the author to understand the disclosure and privacy behaviors displayed by medical patients when facing illness. One portion of the qualitative interview asked about the use of ICT for purposed of disclosure.

The data indicated that a large number of the respondents used ICT to inform their relatives, to contact someone who has similar medical history, to start a friendship with another patient, to get information on alternative treatments and to update their health status (see Table 1). The telephone was the most common technology used while electronic mail and the Internet were used by the respondents. However, there is no doubt that the medium of communication may change to other ICTs in the future. Recent market research reports have shown that the usage of Internet, text messaging and instant messaging are increasing all over the world [2]

One suggestion is to create a web-based portal for access to health information. The purpose of a portal is to provide a one-stop center for patients, where the medical team, with patient consent, can provide health information to patient's network . A portal may be useful when patients are admitted to hospital and going through treatments. One research idea would be to develop a portal prototype and recruit a patient sample to get feedback on the usefulness of a portal system. Specific aspect of disclosure like the content of information, depth of information, the timing of information and the recipient of health information will be a question when designing a portal for this purpose. With careful planning in research design and by combining mixed methodology research (think aloud and experiment), I believe that there is a great potential for a health web portal whose design takes into consideration both disclosure and privacy aspects.

Respondent	Type of ICT	Purpose
Patient	*Email* *Phone*	*Update mom*
Patient	*Internet* *Email*	*To communicate with support group* *To disseminate information*
Patient	*Email* *Phone*	*Contacted medically literate member DC* *Informed all family members about diagnosis*
Patient	*Phone*	*Update best friend about health* *Update employers about treatment status*
Patient	*Phone*	*Update relatives out of state*
Patient	*Phone*	*Check status of family member*
Patient	*Phone*	*Update sisters about health*
Patient	*Phone*	*Update spiritual community about treatment status*
Patient's family	*Phone*	*Call church members to get update*
Patient's family	*Phone*	*Inform siblings who live out of state*
Patient's family	*Internet*	*Check out alternative treatment*
Patient's family	*Email*	*Used email to update friends when sister in law already in critical stage.*
Patient's family	*Phone*	*Called mom's friends to tell about dying stage*
Patient's family	*Phone*	*Update spiritual community* *Called patients to see their status*
Patient's family	*Phone*	*Call mom's friend to update mom status*
Patient's family	*Email*	*Communicated with brother in Europe about mom's health status*

9 medical workers	*Phone*	*Consult patients* *Receive calls from family members to ask about medical decision* *Receive calls from patients' family members to access patient information*

Table 1 - List of respondents who use ICT for health disclosure

References

[1] Zakaria, N. (2006). "To tell or not to tell: Social Dynamics in Disclosure Communities. Ph.D. Dissertation, Syracuse University. *Will be published in Dissertation Abstracts International by January 2007.*

[2] Computer Industry Almanac Press Release. Retrieved August 11, 2006 from http://www.c-i-a.com/pr0106.htm

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