

Publication

Covid-19 and beyond: Broadening horizons about social media use in oncology. A survey study with healthcare professionals caring for youth with cancer

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The study aimed to explore the attitudes of Swiss healthcare professionals toward the use of social media in adolescent and young adult oncology, and to examine whether the ongoing social restrictions due to COVID-19 might have altered these attitudes.; This research was a survey study. The subjects were healthcare providers working in pediatric or adult oncology settings in Switzerland. 62 providers completed the survey. We performed descriptive and inferential statistical analyses.; While considered useful for various professional aspects (professional life 62.1%, educational purposes 72.7%, networking 83.3%, patient engagement 57.6%, clinical trial recruitment 51.5%), only a small proportion of participants actually used social media for professional reasons weekly (32.8%). Just over half considered themselves skillful in using these platforms (56.1%). Regression analysis revealed that self-assessed skillfulness with social media, the Covid-19 impact on attitudes, and the oncology setting, significantly predicted assessment of the usefulness of social media. Although, in answers to open items, institutional guidelines were deemed crucial to improve social media use, many respondents seemed unaware of their existence (50.8%). Only a minority reported an impact of Covid-19 on their attitudes towards the professional implementation of social media (25.0%).; The global health crisis creates important challenges for young patients with cancer and their healthcare providers. In times of social restrictions, social media may be a promising tools to facilitate health information provision, connectivity, and patient care. Virtual mentorship and targeted social media training interventions might be a good way to improve familiarity with using social media and to increase awareness about existing ethical guidelines for their use.

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