



SHORT COMMENTARY

Seniors and Diabetes Education on Social Media

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The growing life expectancy of the population has shown significant increase in the number of elderly [1,2] and seniors have more diabetes than any other age-group [3,4]. Worldwide, the number of people aged 60 or older is growing faster than all younger age groups, with most of the increase in developing countries. In 2017, there are an estimated 962 million people aged 60 or over in the world, comprising 13 per cent of the global population. The number of older persons in the world is projected to be 1.4 billion in 2030 and 2.1 billion in 2050, and could rise to 3.1 billion in 2100 [2]. Currently, almost one-third of United States adults over the age of 65 years have diabetes [5]. Globally, it is estimated that about 30% of older adults meet the criteria for diabetes diagnosis and a 4.5-fold increase in those aged 65 years and older with diabetes has been projected from 2005 to 2050 [6].

The use of new technologies and social networks on the Internet offers opportunities for easy access to self-care and diabetes education [7-9]. Additionally, technology becomes increasingly important in the daily lives of patients and health professionals. Different materials and virtual tools are available to users, including forums, e-books, videos, texts, images, courses, podcasts, scientific papers, summaries of innovative research about the management and treatment of chronic diseases like diabetes and other interesting kinds of common and scientific information [7]. In this context, currently seniors use the Internet, especially Facebook

as a communication tool, interaction, social inclusion, combating loneliness and as a way of learning throughout the aging process [10,11]. Therefore, it becomes important to understand the general characteristics of seniors followers of social networks such as Facebook. Thus, health communication strategies can be improved to achieve this elderly population.

However, the senior population is one of the groups where strong incidences of digital exclusion can be found [10]. Moreover, the use of Information and Communication Technologies can facilitate the access of seniors to the knowledge society, especially in family and social relations can be a motivation for greater coexistence and consequently improvement in their welfare [12]. Digital media have become present everywhere at the same time and easier to use, via the internet, tablets, and smartphones. Being online has become compelling, as much information, goods, services, and people are most available online. Although older people may lose some ties with workmates as they retire, they gain more leisure time to connect with friends and relatives [13].

Although seniors have lower rates of technology adoption than the general public, this group is more digitally connected nowadays [10,11]. Considering the high and increasing number of seniors with diabetes in the world [3], strategies need to be developed to raise awareness among young persons about the importance of seeking and sharing reliable information about the disease, as a tool for the care of elderly people in their surroundings.

The access to technology and the Internet may provide opportunities to reduce risks of social exclusion among seniors with diabetes. However, the technology can't replace human contact, but should to offer additional opportunities to seniors remain connected. Furthermore, special attention should be directed to young persons, because they are directly involved with diabetes management of older persons. So, in future, it would be important to explore the use of technologies and social networks on the Internet by seniors in order to evaluate the impact of this learning kind on the promotion of active aging and also propose diabetes education programs for make it more attractive to this community.

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