
POSTER ABSTRACT**Health professionals' reactions to patients' social media posts about
treatment**4th World Congress on Integrated Care, Wellington, NZ, 23-25 Nov 2016Rolf Wynn¹, Lars-Henrik Myklebust²

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Introduction: Social media use for health purposes is gaining ground, and individuals and organizations are increasingly using social media to inform about and discuss health-related issues and even to offer treatment [1,2]. The health-related use of the Internet and the social media can empower patients in dealing with their own health and illness [3]. However, there has been concern relating to how social media may influence the health professional-patient relationship [4], and guidelines have been developed on health professionals' social media use [5].

Methods: In a pilot study, we performed in-depth interviews with five healthcare providers (one doctor, two psychologists, and two nurses) working at a Norwegian psychiatric university clinic. They were asked about their work-related experiences with social media and especially whether they had experienced that their patients had discussed their treatment on social media. The interviews were analyzed drawing on the method of content analysis.

Results: All had private social media accounts, but none had extensive work-related experience with social media. None had posted on social media as part of their work. Three had read social media comments posted by their patients relating to treatment. Patients' posting of criticism was perceived of as potentially problematic for the health professional-patient relationship.

Discussion, limitations, and lessons learnt: It may represent a challenge for health providers when patients discuss and evaluate their treatment on social media. While patients may post about their interaction with health professionals and treatment, confidentiality makes this off limits to health professionals [4,5]. Moreover, such posts can in some cases reflect ongoing problems in the health professional-patient relationship that should be addressed by the patient and the health professional. If health professionals feel that they are publicly unfairly evaluated by patients, this might provoke negative feelings towards patients and thereby negatively influence the health professional-patient relationship [3-6]. The study suggests that there is a need for discussion amongst health professionals regarding how to handle online criticism in a professional manner. This was a small exploratory study and more research is needed to confirm its findings.

References:

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