#spinalcordinjury: Social Media Insights

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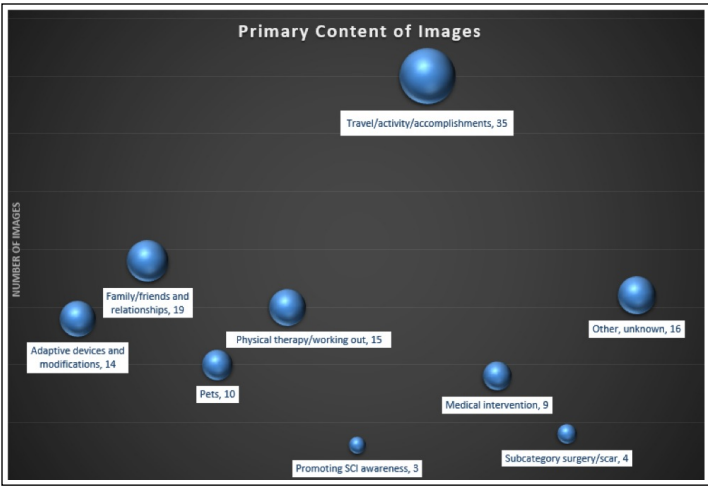Morgantown, WV

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Introduction

The use of social media for health communication is on the rise. Patients utilize social media to find people who share similar health-related concerns and experiences. Peers also provide assistance that promotes a sense of belonging within the community. Use of social media in spinal cord injury has not been examined.

Methods

100 recent images with the tag "#spinalcordinjury" on the social media platform Instagram were identified and analyzed using thematic analysis. Advertisements and non-static images were excluded. Duplicate images were removed. Memes were included. Photographs were coded by two researchers to identify emerging themes with respect to content and photograph type through open coding with consensus between both researchers. Themes were then organized using selective coding. Final coding scheme was determined through consensus of each data point.

Primary Content of Images

- Travel/activity/accomplishments, 35
- Family/friends and relationships, 19
- Other, unknown, 16
- Physical therapy/working out, 15
- Adaptive devices and modifications, 14
- Pets, 10
- Medical intervention, 9
- Subcategory surgery/scar, 4
- Promoting SCI awareness, 3

Results

Primary content included adaptive devices and modifications, family and friends, medical interventions, pets, physical therapy or physical fitness, travel and accomplishments, spinal cord injury advocacy and awareness, and other. Travel and accomplishments were the most prevalent, with over 30% (35 images) representing this category. Family and friends were the next most prevalent (19 images). The most common type of image was a "selfie" (59 images). Medical intervention subtypes included medical marijuana, TENS units, medical complications (urinary tract infection), and photographs of scars, radiographs, or of the account holder in an acute care setting.

Table 1
Coding scheme, rationale and codes generated

Overarching category	Rationale	Codes Generated
Type of Image	To see if users are posting pictures of themselves, others, places or things.	Pictures of one person (selfie), Pictures taken by user (true selfie), scenes or things, other people-group photo, memes.
Content of Image	To see what was in the images users chose to post on their account.	Travel/activity/accomplishment, Promoting SCI awareness, Physical therapy/working out, Pets, Medical intervention (sub category- surgical scar), Family/friends and relationships, Adaptive devices and modifications.

Table 2
Content of images

Primary Content	Number of images (N)	Percent of all content category (%)
Adaptive devices and modifications	14	11 (SCI related)
Family/friends and relationships	19	15
Pets	10	13
Physical therapy/working out	15	8 (SCI related)
Promoting SCI awareness	3	2 (SCI related)
Travel/activity/accomplishments	35	28
Medical intervention	9	7 (SCI related)
Subcategory surgery/scar	4	3 (SCI related)
Other, unknown	16	13

Conclusions

Social media is playing an increasingly important role for health communication. It provides a means for patients to connect and share experiences, while providing insight to healthcare workers involved in their care.

Learning Objectives

By the conclusion of this session, participants should be able to: 1. Understand the role of social media in sharing about spinal cord injury 2. Recognize commonly expressed themes in social media posts regarding spinal cord injury

References

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2. Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research. (2018). Support groups: Make connections, get help. Retrieved Feb 14, 2018, from https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/support-groups/art-20044655
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