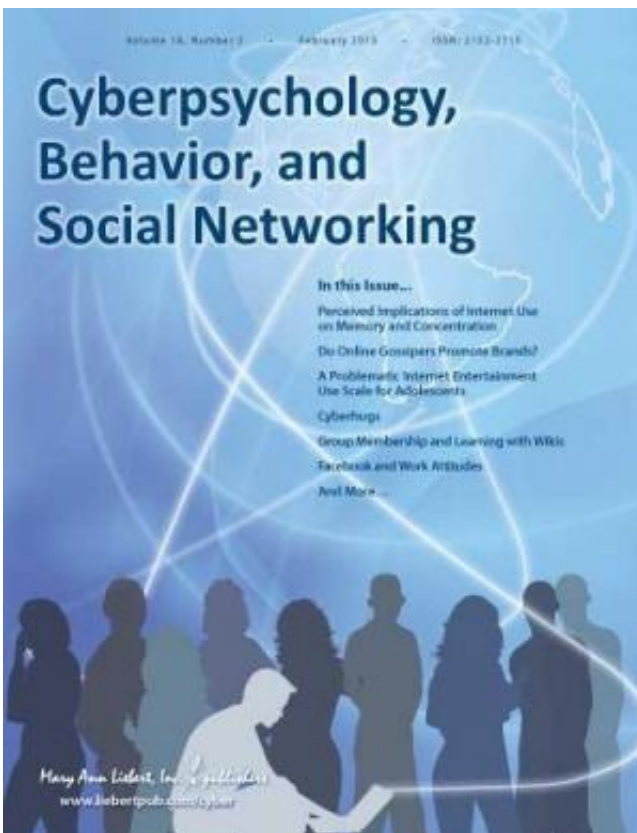


Can online chat rooms and 'cyberhugs' help chronic pain sufferers cope?

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The more than 100 million Americans living with chronic pain and daily suffering often have limited outlets to talk about their conditions with others who can understand and offer comfort. Online chatrooms may provide a beneficial forum where chronic pain sufferers can openly and

safely communicate, as discussed in an article in *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*.

In "[Cyberhugs: Creating a Voice for Chronic Pain Sufferers through Technology](#)," author Karin Becker, University North Dakota, Grand Forks, describes the [social stigma](#), gender politics, and professional repercussions that often discourage people affected by chronic pain from talking about it. Her study of the role that online chatrooms dedicated to individuals with chronic pain can have in establishing a sense of community revealed two key themes: the importance of validation and encouragement.

"Online chatrooms may provide another outlet for support for [chronic pain sufferers](#) and may work towards removing barriers this population often experiences," says Brenda K. Wiederhold, PhD, MBA, BCIA, Editor-in-Chief of *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, from the Interactive Media Institute, San Diego, CA.

More information: The article is available free online on the [Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking](#) website.

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