

Facebook use leads to depression? No, says Wisconsin study

July 9 2012

MADISON- A study of university students is the first evidence to refute the supposed link between depression and the amount of time spent on Facebook and other social-media sites.

The University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public [Health study](#) suggests that it may be unnecessarily alarming to advise patients and parents on the risk of "Facebook Depression" based solely on the amount of [Internet use](#). The results are published online today in the [Journal of Adolescent Health](#).

Last year, the American Academy of Pediatrics released a report on the effects of social media on children and adolescents. The report suggested that exposure to Facebook could lead to depression. Researchers led by Lauren Jelenchick and Dr. Megan Moreno surveyed 190 University of Wisconsin-Madison students between the ages of 18 and 23, using a real-time assessment of [Internet activity](#) and a validated, clinical [screening method](#) for depression.

The students were surveyed with 43 text-message questionnaires at random intervals over a seven-day period between February and December of 2011. The students were asked if they were currently online, how many minutes they had been online and what they were doing on the Internet.

The study found that the survey participants were on Facebook for over half of the total time online. When Jelenchick and Moreno evaluated the

data including the depression-screening results, they found no significant associations between social-media use and the probability of depression.

"Our study is the first to present scientific evidence on the suggested link between social-media use and risk of depression," said Jelenchick, who just received a master's degree in public health from the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health. "The findings have important implications for clinicians who may prematurely alarm parents about social-media use and depression risks."

Moreno, a [pediatrician](#) who has been widely published in the area of social-media use among children and adolescents, advises parents to look at their children's social-media use in the context of their entire lives. She says parents don't have to be overly concerned if their child's behavior and mood haven't changed, they have friends and their school work is consistent.

"While the amount of time on Facebook is not associated with depression, we encourage parents to be active role models and teachers on safe and balanced media use for their children," said Moreno.

According to recent studies, more than 70 percent of adolescents use social media sites, most commonly [Facebook](#).

Provided by University of Wisconsin-Madison

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