

Student researches social media usage in healthcare reform

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Forest Institute doctoral student Gage Stermensky II recently conducted a study on consumer attitudes towards healthcare reform and the use of social media. More than 1,000 participants from around the US, of various ages, educational level, incomes, ethnicity, rural, and metropolitan areas participated in the study.

Stermensky says his goal was for people to be able to advocate for themselves in upcoming changes in [healthcare reform](#) and to identify how social media can be utilized by researchers, [educational institutions](#), mental health and healthcare agencies.

"Due to upcoming changes in healthcare policy directly affecting the United States, it is essential to understand barriers consumers have in understanding and advocating for healthcare issues important to them," said Stermensky.

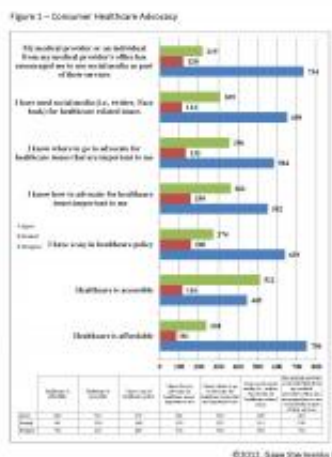
The study indicated that the majority of participants have utilized social media sources for healthcare information at least once in the past month. However, a majority of participants indicated they do not know how or where to go to advocate for healthcare issues important to them despite the numerous social media venues for doing so. Furthermore, participants indicated that their healthcare providers have not informed them of such social media outlets.

Consumers indicated they would like to have access to social media or mobile technology to obtain information on current diseases, insurance,

Medicare or Medicaid information, healthcare policy updates, updates in current healthcare information, communicating with family about healthcare issues, and support groups. However, participants did not indicate preferences for using these services to communicate with employers about healthcare related topics, prescription drug services, billing, or personal records.

"Social media utilization is obviously an important part of communication in our society today. In order to move towards a patient-centered healthcare system, it appears we need to meet consumers where they are at in order to include them in important [healthcare policy](#) decision making, as well as making social media an integral part of consumer healthcare services," said Stermensky.

The data in the following tables shows a breakdown of participants' views on the different topics regarding social media and healthcare reform.



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