

Internet use can reduce fatalistic view of cancer

December 10 2012

Many Americans have fatalistic views on cancer prevention—they believe that getting cancer is a matter of luck or fate. Recent research, published in the *Journal of Communication*, found that people who use the internet to inquire about their health are more likely to have a positive outlook on cancer prevention and diagnosis.

Chul-joo Lee, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Jeff Niederdeppe, Cornell University, and Derek Freres, University of Pennsylvania, published in the *Journal of Communication* their findings from a nationally representative survey of adults between the ages of 40 and 70. Conducted longitudinally over the course of a year, the survey collected 2,489 cases and were weighted for age, gender, ethnicity, education and census region. Previous studies have shown that local TV viewing can increase cancer fatalism overtime. This study is the first to examine [internet use](#), and the results were promising.

The findings suggested that people who use the Internet frequently to acquire health or medical information are less likely than those who do not use the Internet for such purposes to hold cancer fatalism over time. More importantly, the research showed that Internet use reduced cancer fatalism among less educated and less health-knowledgeable people to a greater extent than among more educated and more knowledgeable people.

"Reducing cancer fatalism, especially among people with [low socioeconomic status](#), is arguably one of the most important public

health goals in the nation," Lee said. "Studying the effect of Internet use on cancer fatalism is important, considering that the Internet has become a new, very crucial source of health information for the American public these days. These findings have important implications since we showed that the Internet may be a very effective channel of [health communication](#) especially for people with low socioeconomic status."

More information: Socioeconomic Disparities in Fatalistic Beliefs About Cancer Prevention, By Chul-joo Lee, Jeff Niederdeppe and Derek Freres; *Journal of Communication*, [DOI 10.1111/j.1460-2466.2012.01683.x](#)

Provided by International Communication Association

Citation: Internet use can reduce fatalistic view of cancer (2012, December 10) retrieved 18 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2012-12-internet-fatalistic-view-cancer.html>

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