

The Importance of Internet-based Educational and Clinical Interventions and Social Networks in Pregnant Women

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Received 2016 August 24; Accepted 2016 August 31.

Keywords: Social Networks, Pregnant Women, Social Support

Social Networks are defined as a group of Internet-based applications that are built on ideological and technology infrastructure and help people create and share information (1). Social networks are able to support the management of patients with online patient-provider communication and by allowing patients to share their experiences with other patients without being limited by their geographical locations. In fact, the sharing of health information between people via social networks is associated with better patient management (2). Today social networks are used to facilitate discussions and exchange of information on a wide range of health issues. Studies have indicated that Internet-based educational and clinical interventions during pregnancy and immediately after pregnancy can be beneficial for women (3).

Web-based educational interventions during and after pregnancy can improve maternal and newborn health by promoting education and improving access. In addition, these interventions can change the current paradigm of perinatal care, giving clinicians an opportunity to provide ongoing care for pregnant women (4). In the Netherlands, pregnant women use e-mail-based interventions. In fact, this is a communication channel through which health-related messages are sent to pregnant women (5). Furthermore, in one research in America, it was shown that 82% of pregnant women were willing to participate in Internet and mobile-based interventions on postpartum weight loss and 59% of them stated that they used social networks to access pregnancy and childbirth-related information (4).

Pregnant women use social networks in order to exchange information, obtain social support and increase self efficacy (6); also, social networks are new approaches for empowering mothers and encourages them to breast feed their child and do so for a longer duration. In addition, social networks are important tools to obtain in-

formation about infant feeding (7). A study in America showed that mothers who used social networks and text messages had weight loss of about 2.3 kg in comparison with the control group and 80% of them reported that the use of social networks and text messages are very useful for them. As a result, the use of social networks and text messages is regarded as acceptable and effective for weight loss during the postpartum period. In addition, social networks provide a mechanism for mothers to acquire new information and immediate feedback and interact with other people in the virtual world (8).

Social networks are useful tools for social support and reduce stress in the subjects and they can improve the overall health and quality of life. Moreover, they empower mothers through the exchange of information and emotional support. Electronic health is also a promising channel for interventions, which aims to promote healthy behaviors; also the use of this technology allows large-scale interventions at a low cost, with convenience and accessibility; consequently, Internet-based educational and clinical interventions and social networks are recommended for Iranian pregnant women.

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