

TECHNOLOGY USE AMONG NEW PATIENTS PRESENTING TO A UROGYNECOLOGY PRACTICE

Hypothesis / aims of study

The aim of this study was to assess new urogynecology patients' technology use and preferences for receiving medical information.

Study design, materials and methods

We distributed an anonymous survey to all new patients presenting to our practice from November 1, 2012 to January 31, 2013. The questionnaire included questions about race, education level, cell phone, smartphone, tablet, and computer usage and comfort. It also asked patients how they prefer to receive information about their medical condition and if they would use various modalities including websites, apps, and text messaging to monitor their condition. Data are presented as proportion or median (interquartile range). Groups were compared with chi-square, Fisher's exact or Wilcoxon tests.

Results

A total of 146 patients completed our questionnaire. The median age among respondents was 51.0 (38.5-65.5) years, 85.6% were Caucasian and 70.5% reported completing college. Respondents reported a median of 1.5 (0.5-2.5) hours of television viewing and 1.5 (0.5-2.5) hours of internet use per day. The majority of patients (87.7%) had a cell phone and of these, 57.8% used it at least several times per day. Seventy five percent of patients sent and received text messages from their phone, and 65.6% of respondents with a cell phone used a smartphone. Among all respondents, only 31.5% reported having an iPad or tablet. Nearly all respondents (84.2%) had a home computer with internet access, and of those women, 111 (90.2%) said that they were comfortable using it.

Of the respondents, 122 identified their preferred method to receive medical information about their condition. Handouts were preferred by 54.6% of respondents, followed by email (41.0%), website (12.3%) and DVD (4.1%). Even among respondents who used smartphones at least several times per day and were very comfortable with their home computer, handouts and email were each preferred by 44.0%. Despite this, when questioned about methods to monitor their treatment, the majority of patients were likely (≥ 6 on a scale of 0 to 10) to use a form of technology: 73.9% were likely to use a website, 60.8% were likely to use an app, and 63.1% were likely to use text messages. Nearly all respondents (98.4%) were open to using a website to learn about their medical condition. Women who were ≤ 65 years of age were more likely to report using each of these technologies to monitor their medical treatments than women >65 years (all $p < 0.01$). Women with a college education were more likely to report using a website to learn about their condition than women without a college education ($p = 0.03$). However, college education did not influence preferences regarding use of websites, apps, and text messages to monitor treatments (all $p > 0.37$).

Interpretation of results

Patients presenting to our urogynecology clinic are generally comfortable using several forms of technology but still prefer to receive information about their medical condition through handouts. Patients are open to using various websites, apps, and text message reminders to monitor their condition. Younger women are more likely to use these modalities than older women. Based on these findings, providers should consider alternative methods to communicate, educate, and monitor urogynecology patients in addition to conventional paper methods.

Concluding message

Urogynecology patients are able to use multiple forms of technology to learn about their condition and monitor their treatment; however they chose conventional handouts as their preferred modality for receiving information.

Disclosures

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