EDITORIAL

Digital health brand, promoter of quality digital care

Marca digital sanitaria, promotora de cuidados digitales de calidad

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The National Statistics Institute\(^1\) made a simulation of the ageing of the resident population from 2016 to 2066. If we look at Fig. 1, the percentage of the population aged 65 and over which currently represents 18.7% of the total population, will rise to 25.6% in 2031, and 34.6% in 2066. People aged 100 or more will rise from today’s 16,460 to over 222,104 within 50 years. This situation will have a negative effect on the national health system due to the amount of resources required to cover society’s demands. New health strategies are needed to prevent impairment of the future health system.

In the light of this possible future scenario, digital health has been conceived as the great opportunity to maintain healthcare and reduce costs. The benefits derived\(^2\) from the establishment of digital health mainly focus on improving shared decision making, more personalised attention and even the reduction in loss of time associated with registration. Communication information technologies (CIT) applied to health systems may therefore help health professionals and patients improve their quality of life.

The Internet has become a 24-h health library, with millions of websites and articles which are readily and freely available to anyone. Unlimited access through search engines like google has led to the consideration of several important aspects regarding communication with professionals. Over 60% of the Spanish population\(^3\) use the Internet for health information consultations and one in every 5 persons do so through social media.

Society is ever evolving and CIT is increasingly within everyone’s grasp, achieving maturity levels of 86% in social media penetration\(^4\) in the population aged between 16 and 65 in 2017. The leading question is: are we as health professionals using social media to improve our patient care?

Social media usage in the professional field depends largely on its relevance in our daily clinical practice. Social media can be outstanding channels of relationship and communication between professional colleagues, and also with our patients. Several of their advantages would be:

- Providing an information source for updating knowledge.
- Helping to spread accurate healthcare information to society as a whole.
- Enabling the improvement of communication with patients and thereby their commitment to and involvement in their own healthcare.
- Inspiring changes in lifestyles.
- Improving our reputation.
- Helping us to be benchmarks in our sector.
- Establishing new contacts and cooperation with colleagues of our profession.
- Improving our collective visibility as a group and positioning.

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Communication is the key to success. The idea of CIT as a complement to be included into our way of working as professionals is ideal, but very far removed from our current reality.

Every professional should be capable of communicating efficiently with the rest of the organisation, and with the outside world, using all available media and formats. Digital knowledge is acquired and developed, and it is also essential to obtain new digital skills. “Digital competence” may be defined as the combination of knowledge, ability, skills and approaches which serve to achieve objectives efficiently and effectively.

Digital skills are necessary for organisations and professionals to be able to take advantage of and use digital opportunities to the full, so that personalised care and quality may be offered. According to the Chema Cepeda model, the main skills are:

Digital communication skills

1. Innovative vision.
2. Information management.
3. Digital identity.
4. Network.
5. Permanent learning.
6. Content publication.
7. Communication.

A recent study on the effect of using different websites on health has concluded that doctors are concerned about 2 factors: the reliability of information to be found on the Internet and the loss of trust in professionals.

Excessive internet content of dubious quality is called infoxication, a term which is proving to be a huge challenge to those of us dedicated to fighting against pseudoscience. Internet positioning is the aim of the great majority of the internet community and in terms of health, it may play against us because in Google the most viewed sites are positioned first, not those with the highest scientifically accurate material.

Health hoaxes are increasingly more common due to the fact that Internet visits are prioritised over the veracity of published information.

If as professionals we are competent in digital health, we will be capable of improving communication with patients, scientific societies and patient associations which contribute to the reduction of hoaxes on health in the Internet. The future of reliable and quality digital health may be possible with collective, transverse projects. As previously stated, communication is the key to success. Meanwhile, several recommendations for obtaining good health information in Internet would be:

**Digital skills for fighting against health infoxication**

- A reliable website should never be anonymous.
- Verify whether the website has a quality certificate.
- Do not trust information merely from the quality of its wording.
- Internet information can also expire.
- Listing sources and trials endorses credibility.
- Information and advertising has to be well differentiated.
- Contrast information with your healthcare provider.

An informed patient is a patient with better health.

**References**


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