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Predicting and Increasing Social Media Use in Public Health

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Predicting and Increasing Social Media Use in Public Health

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BACKGROUND

A recent Health Education Specialist Practice Analysis found an increased need for health education specialists to use social media, as it is becoming a quick, effective way to spread health messages and reach a large, diverse audience. Benefits of social media include increasing timely dissemination of information, reaching a broad audience, personalizing messages, and engaging and empowering people.

OBJECTIVES

Participants will be able to: 1) identify significant predictors of social media use and most utilized social media tools. 2) evaluate their own work-related use of social media as compared to other public health professionals. 3) apply at least one new social media strategy to their own professional efforts.

METHODS

A 22-item survey examined the extent to which health professionals utilized social media in their professional roles. Sample included 1,398 Certified Health Education Specialists/Masters Certified Health Education Specialists. Logistical regression and odds ratios were used to determine significant predictors and likelihood of engaging in social media use.

RESULTS

Descriptive analysis shows most health educators using social media are master's degree female professionals between the ages of 25-34, working in urban, government settings. Significant predictors of social media use are workplace setting, blocking of websites by employers, and years in the field. Only 33% enjoy and prefer using social media.

CONCLUSION

Differences exist in the amount and type(s) of social media used, and preference for using social media. To facilitate efficient use of social media, professional preparation programs/workplaces should consider social media training.