

The receptiveness to obstetric and gynaecological health related social media content and its impact on decision making by healthcare clients.

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INTRODUCTION

- Social media networks like facebook have revolutionized the means of information sharing virtually in every field including healthcare.
- It may also influence perception and decision making of the potential health care clients particularly in Obstetrics and Gynaecology in the context of privacy and embarrassment related concerns with possible negative and/or positive repercussions on both the client and the practising doctor.

OBJECTIVES

- This survey aimed at evaluating the receptiveness of social network users to obstetrics and gynaecology related social media content and to assess how such information can influence the decision making process of potential healthcare clients.

METHODS

- A cross-sectional online survey was conducted with voluntary participation of 126 female social media users.
- Likert scale based self-administered web based questionnaire was the data collection tool.
- Data entry and data analysis was done using Microsoft office excel package.

RESULTS

- Mean age of the population was 30.4 years (SD 5.9 years)
- 61.9% (n=78) agreed that social media content influences their health related decision making while 10.3% (n=13) strongly disagreed to it.
- 41.3% (n=52) stated that they choose their obstetrician/gynaecologist &/or hospital based on recommendations and feedback in social media. A negative remark of a healthcare provider could create a pessimistic impression in 71.4% (n=90).
- 29 (23%) participants preferred to try home remedies/alternative medicine formulas promoted by other social media users particularly pertaining to subfertility, sexual problems and incontinence.
- The reasons for switching to social media for health issues were poor communication by healthcare providers, available firsthand experience of fellow users, low cost and convenience.

Table 1: Obstetrics and Gynaecology related online content usage by healthcare clients

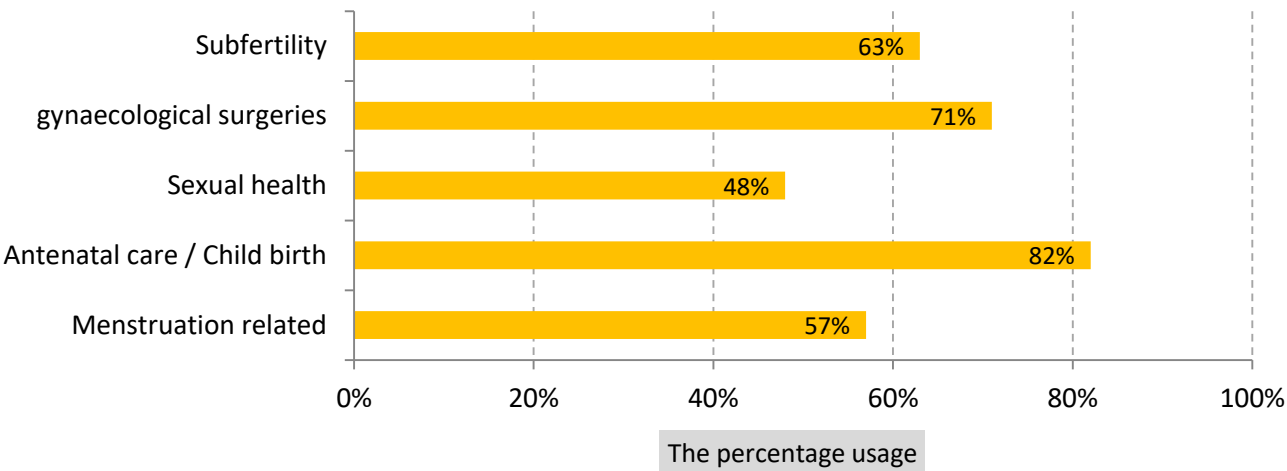


Table 2: Client perspectives on online social media content

	"Strongly agreed" or "Agreed"	Neither "Agreed" nor "Disagreed"	"Strongly disagreed" or "Disagreed"
Social media content affects my health related decision making	78 (61.9%)	28 (22.2%)	20 (15.9%)
I choose my Obstetrician/Gynaecologist based on reviews and recommendations available in social media	52 (41.3%)	25 (19.8%)	49 (38.9%)
I avoid institutes and doctors who get negative remarks in social media for my obstetric/gynaecological concerns	90 (71.4%)	30 (23.8%)	6 (4.8%)

DISCUSSION

- Social media platforms may have a profound impact on obstetrics and gynaecology related health decision making by the potential clients.
- Therefore healthcare providers must be conscientious in their practice with excellent communication skills.
- Conversely, health related content particularly regarding women's health published in social media must be credible and regulated.

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