

Patients' opinions about the use of Snapchat in medical consultations in Saudi Arabia

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Abstract— The objective of this study was to assess patients' opinions about the use of Snapchat in medical consultations in Saudi Arabia. A descriptive, cross-sectional design study was carried out through Google search with a sample of 114 patients who used Snapchat. The questionnaire was distributed through WhatsApp. The findings indicated that most of the respondents used Snapchat for general purposes and the majority of them considered that it is not a practical medical consultation tool. Also, more than half of the participants preferred a live medical consultation instead of an online consultation. However, Snapchat can be an effective method for medical consultation because is cheap, and it can be available and accessible anytime and anywhere.

Keywords- Snapchat, medical consultation, patients' opinions, Saudi Arabia, social media

I. INTRODUCTION

Social media such as, Twitter, YouTube, MySpace, WhatsApp, Instagram, Snapchat, LinkedIn and others facilitate communication, interaction and dissemination of information between people from different specialties around the world, including the health sector. [1,2] Nowadays, social media are an essential part of people's daily lives and are an effective and easily accessible way to provide health education to doctors and patients, and offer medical services at low cost [1-3].

Snapchat is a very popular free mobile application, especially with young people, that can be used in a smartphone to send and share texts, videos, drawings, photos and other features. The statistics showed that Snapchat had 186 million active users worldwide in the third quarter of 2018 [4].

As far as Saudi Arabia is concerned, a recent report indicated that over 9 million people from this country were the most active users of Snapchat in the world, with a penetration rate of 39% as of the third quarter of 2017 [5,6]. However, despite the widespread use of Snapchat in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, there are only a few studies related to the use of Snapchat in the healthcare and medicine areas.8 In addition, no studies were found using Snapchat as a medical consultation tool.

In this sense, the main objective of this study is to assess patients' opinions about the use of Snapchat in medical consultations in Saudi Arabia.

II. METHODS

A descriptive cross-sectional study was designed to investigate patients' opinions about the use of Snapchat in medical consultations in Saudi Arabia. To carry out this research a random sample consisting of 114 participants who used Snapchat were selected through Google search, and the participants perceptions were assessed using a questionnaire created using Google Forms. The questionnaire was designed, reviewed and edited by the research team following the research institution standards.

The questionnaire contained closed- ended and multiple choices questions, and consisted of two parts. The first part was designed to identify the demographic data of the participants including gender, age and level of education. The second part had 4 questions aimed at obtaining information related to the use of Snapchat in medical consultations in Saudi Arabia, and the perception of the participants about live medical consultation: Do you have Snapchat? What is your opinion about Snapchat consultation? Why you are seeking for this medical consultation? Are you with live medical consultation?

III. RESULTS

According to Table 1, the demographic information of the participants suggests that most of them were over 31 years old, and 58 % of the respondents were females. Also, more than half of the respondents had a bachelor's degree in education.

TABLE I. PARTICIPANTS' DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION (N=114)

Variable	n (%)
Gender	
Male	42
Female	58
Education	
High school	10
Diploma	27
Bachelor	51
Master	10
Other	2

In Figure 1 we can appreciate that most of the participants were using the Snapchat application (95 %) for different purposes.

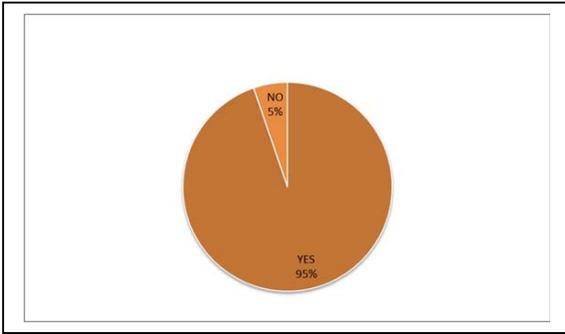


Figure 1. Use of Snapchat by the participants (n=114)

Alike, in Table 2 is presented the opinions of the participants about the use of Snapchat in medical consultations. In this regard, 14% of participants viewed the Snapchat consultation as a legal method, whereas 28 % considered it as illegal.

TABLE II. PARTICIPANTS' OPINIONS ABOUT SNAPCHAT MEDICAL CONSULTATION (N=114)

	n (%)
What is your opinion about Snapchat medical consultation?	
Not practical	58
Legal	14
Illegal	28
Why are you seeking for this medical consultation?	
Less cost	18
Quick response	32
Available anytime	50

Also, more than half of the respondents (58%) thought that it was an unpractical method of consultation. When

the participants were asked about the reasons behind seeking medical advice through Snapchat; the responses were: availability at all time (50%), low cost (18%), and quick response (32%).

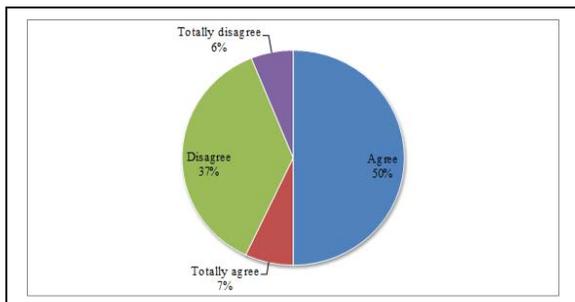


Figure 2. Opinion of the respondents about live medical consultation (n=114)

On the other hand, Figure 2 shows the opinions of the respondents about live medical consultations. The results revealed that the majority of the participants (57%) agreed with the live medical consultation (agree 50% and totally agree 7%). While 43% did not agree (disagree 37% and 6% totally disagree).

IV. DISCUSSION

The results of this study about the use of Snapchat in medical consultations in Saudi Arabia indicated that this application is widely employed for different purposes in the daily activities of the participants (95%). This finding coincides with the fact that people from Saudi Arabia were reported as the most active consumers of Snapchat worldwide in 2017 [6].

However, in spite of its wide usage in daily life, more than half of the respondents (57%) thought that Snapchat is not a practical tool for medical consultation. About this issue, it is possible to suggest that the briefness of the “snaps” make this tool no adequate for medical consultation [3].

Furthermore, more than one fourth of the respondents considered that this tool is illegal. Regarding this opinion, it is pertinent to point out that the use of Snapchat in medical practice has been controversial and involve risks that affect the privacy and confidentiality of patients and the credibility of physicians [7]. Also, several authors that have pointed out the possibility of inaccuracy of information or breaching patient privacy and confidentiality when using any kind of social media [1,2,8].

On the other hand, half of the participants (50%) were seeking Snapchat as a medical consultation tool because it is available anytime. In relation to the opinion of the respondents about live medical consultation we observed that more than half of them (57%) agreed with live medical consultation. Some studies tend to confirm this result suggesting that online medical consultation based on internet patient -doctor interaction have some advantages but present several concerns related to decreasing face to face interaction and communication, and the possibility of the rupture of patient privacy [1,9].

V. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study related to patients' opinions about the use of Snapchat in medical consultations in Saudi Arabia showed that most of the respondents used Snapchat for general purposes and the majority of them considered that it is not a practical medical consultation tool. Also, more than half of the participants preferred a live medical consultation instead of an online consultation. However, Snapchat can be an effective method for medical consultation because is cheap, and it can be available and accessible anytime and anywhere.

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