

ABSTRACT:

STREAM: **ENGAGING THE HEALTH CARE CONSUMER**

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24 Hours of Twitter: Exploring Health Determinants

Background: Micro-blogging using Twitter, is a popular method of communicating. Twitter enables individuals to share ideas and news instantly through 140 character text messages. Micro-blogging has demonstrated interesting attributes in terms of relaying breaking news and other trending topics within a globally based conversation.

Purpose: This study explores a 24 hour period of virtually shared personal health issues using ‘Twitter’.

Methods: 2400 tweets (messages) containing the word ‘health’ were analyzed using a directed content analysis approach. One hundred ‘tweets’ from the end of each hour of one day (24 hours) were captured using ‘The Archivist’ data collection software. The analysis was guided by the Public Health Agency of Canada’s Determinant of Health (DOH) framework. A collection of Canada, US, and world news headlines gathered from the Yahoo news feed provided the context for this study.

Results: Predominant health care themes within this 24 hour period included ‘health services’, ‘personal health practices’, and environmental issues. The themes reflected current discussion regarding proposed health policy change within the US. Tweets reflecting personal health practices focused on health promoting activities and issues of an environmental nature included product recalls, and H1N1 updates.

Conclusions: Micro-blogging using Twitter provides a timely and user friendly platform for publishing personally relevant health information. Twitter as a communication platform allows for immediate contribution to ongoing conversations addressing health issues at the individual, community and societal levels.

BIO:

Lorie Donelle RN, PhD, is an Assistant Professor within the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Western Ontario (UWO) and is jointly appointed to the School of Nursing, and the School of Health Studies. Dr. Donelle's teaching focuses on health promotion, health literacy, and the use of information technology within healthcare. Her research explores the concept of health literacy and its influence on the health status of health consumers. Paralleling this is her interest in studying technological influences on consumer and practitioner health practices. ldonelle@uwo.ca

Richard Booth RN, MScN, is a doctoral student at the University of Western Ontario studying clinician adoption and use of health technology. He works clinically as a psychiatric-mental health nurse in the adult psychosis/moods program at St. Joseph's Health Care London. In the past, he has consulted on various health informatics projects, including the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario, Nursing and eHealth project. His current interests include clinician use of technology, consumer health informatics, and socio-technical approaches to studying health informatics. rbooth5@uwo.ca