

E-Health Literacy: A Skill Needed in the Coronavirus Outbreak Crisis

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Received 2020 April 12; Accepted 2020 July 20.

Keywords: E-Health Literacy; Information; Social Media; Coronavirus; Outbreak

Dear Editor,

At present, COVID-19 is widespread throughout China and the world (1), and it has made a serious problem for public health. Similar to other epidemics, people are intended to know the solutions to prevent and treat the disease (2). At this time (May 2020), along with the pandemic of COVID-19, there is a need to inform and increase the awareness of this disease among different classes of people in different communities because of the lack of knowledge of the ways of prevention, control, and treatment for self-care and self-control. Controlling people is very important. People in the affected communities must learn to protect themselves from the potential risks and harms of the outbreak of this mysterious and unknown new virus. Therefore, access to health information, the messages about health education, awareness of prevention, and selecting a healthy lifestyle will assist people in coping with COVID-19. Supporting people's access to valid health information leads to a change in the philosophy of prevention, control, inhibition, and treatment of the disease, which causes the national development of health (3).

Moreover, timely and precise information is essential for preventing and treating COVID-19 for both the general public and the scientific community (4). It is evident that a type of information tsunami accompanies the outbreak of any disease, and this information is always accompanied by false information and rumors. In social media, the phenomenon of the spread of false information and rumors is increased at every moment and progresses faster and faster, which is similar to the rapid spread of viruses in humans (4).

Currently, a great deal of information has been published on the Internet, especially social networks, in the prevention and treatment of COVID-19. This information can sometimes be inaccurate and invalid with no scientific basis (5, 6). Therefore, this is a challenge because it affects

people's behavior of prevention and treatment. Moreover, it increases the media's frequent exposure to incorrect information, crises, anxiety, and stress reactions among people; hence, preparing the proper information from a valid source is a significant issue in this epidemic.

Nowadays, the Internet and web resources are frequently employed by different users such as citizens, students, and patients to search for information and make health-based decisions. The ability to discover, evaluate, and use health information on the web is affected by e-health literacy (7). E-health literacy is the skill to search, find, understand, and evaluate health information from electronic information resources and employ this information to make diagnoses or appropriate health-based decisions (8). Therefore, people with e-health literacy skills use more efficient web search strategies and show a better ability to recognize high-quality health information.

Concerning the issues as mentioned above, education and information on the improvement of e-health literacy by the leading authorities such as the Ministry of Health and Medical Education and the Ministry of Education are essential and can cause better control and management of the spread of false information and rumors among different classes of the community. The important issue is that in contrast to other crises (e.g., floods, earthquakes, explosions, and bombardment), COVID-19 is an invisible and immeasurable crisis. Hence, it is essential to get accurate and timely information to stop its outbreak. The e-health literacy skills are prerequisites for obtaining precise and high-quality information about health in the information explosion and digital age.

Authors' Contribution: None declared by author.

Conflict of Interests: None declared by author.

Funding/Support: None declared by author.

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