

Healthcare representatives tweeting about #diabetes: Follow the leaders!



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Introduction

Healthcare representatives (professionals and institutions) could serve as opinion leaders on diabetes, and behaviour change endorsers, according to Kelly's model¹.

With 300 million of users, Twitter could represent an effective education channel to promote health-related behaviour change². However, it is not common that healthcare representatives on Twitter are perceived as opinion leaders.

This study analyzes if healthcare representatives are tweeting about #diabetes could be perceived as opinion leaders on Twitter.

Method

Ten thousand tweets tagged with the hashtag #diabetes were downloaded (including number of retweets and favorites). Users' profile details, number of followers, and date of creation of the Twitter account were also extracted. Users identifying themselves as healthcare representatives were identified.

Conclusion

Healthcare representatives seem to be perceived as key opinion leaders on Twitter (their messages are more retweeted and favorited). Thus, there is a potential in healthcare representatives tweeting about #diabetes for promoting health-related behaviour change among diabetes patients³.

References:

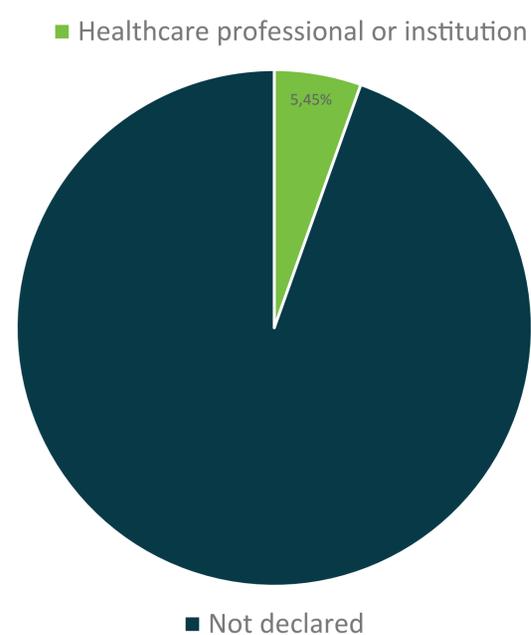
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2. Statista. Number of social media users worldwide from 2010 to 2020 (in billions). 2016; Available from: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/278414/number-of-worldwide-social-network-users>

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Results

- Only 545 among the 10.000 tweets were posted by healthcare representatives (441 by individual healthcare professionals, and 104 by healthcare institutions)



- Healthcare representatives had a similar number of followers than the rest of the users (8899.4 vs. 8982.1; $p=0.97$). However healthcare institutions had significantly more followers than healthcare professionals acting as individuals (29323.4 vs. 4082.9; $p<0.001$)
- Seniority of healthcare users was higher than the rest of the users (1714.6 days on Twitter, vs. 1320.4; $p<0.05$)
- Tweets from healthcare representatives were more often retweeted and favorited than the ones posted by the rest of the users (10.6 vs. 6.7; and 1.3 vs. 0.5, respectively; $p<0.05$)



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