

Does Online Searching Cause or Enforce Health Information Disparity?

Yong Mi Kim

Abstract:

A growing number of people are seeking health information on the Internet. To meet demands, healthcare providers are increasingly disseminating information online. While online health information has enhanced the dissemination of health information and improved people's health-related knowledge, critics posit that such dissemination has widened knowledge disparities in health information and health benefits as a result. Drawing on existing studies, this study identified the main causes of such disparity, namely education, health literacy, computer self-efficacy, and usage of health-related social media. The finding showed that education resided at the center of the disparity and impacted other elements. An interesting finding is although individuals possess high levels of computer self-efficacy, the efficacy does not highly impact their health benefits, meaning that computer does not directly cause health information disparity but is the tool to promote health-related knowledge disparity.