The use of social networks and their role in sharing health information among pregnant women

Background: Promoting health knowledge and awareness of women has an important impact on society. Because of their role, pregnant women are the most important consumers of health services. Therefore, their knowledge and awareness of health information should be improved. Improving access to health information and increasing awareness help patients to gain self-care capabilities, interact better with medical professionals and get involved in clinical decision making. Social networks as a recent and widespread source of information can facilitate access to information and fill the information gaps. The aim of this study was to determine the extent to which pregnant women use social networks and the role of these networks in sharing health information among them.

Material and Methods: This is cross-sectional and descriptive study was conducted in 2014 in Kerman. The study populations were pregnant women who met obstetricians and gynecologists in their offices, during the study period. Data were collected using a questionnaire consisting of three sections; demographic information of participants, questions about using social networks and questions about effects of these networks on health status of pregnant women. The reliability of the questionnaire was confirmed by three medical informatics and health information technology specialists. Its reliability was confirmed by a correlation coefficient of 71%. Data were analyzed using SPSS.22.

Results: In total, 144 pregnant women participated to this study. Approximately 49% of participating pregnant women used social networks. Among them 36%, 39 and 44 percent used Telegram, WhatsApp and Instagram, respectively. Almost 77% of them used these networks to share information related to perinatal care. Also, about 43% of women stated that these networks had improved their health knowledge and awareness.

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knowledge and awareness of their health status. About 85% of women believed that use of these networks helped them to improve their pregnancy status. About 86% of them considered the use of social network as helpful. Conclusion: This study showed a high penetration rate of social networks among pregnant women and revealed the positive effect of these networks on sharing perinatal information and on improving the health status of this group. Based on this study, these networks can be used as appropriate tools to provide useful health information to pregnant women. Future studies should address accuracy and reliability of medical and health information circulating on these networks.

کلمات کلیدی:
Social networks, pregnant women, self-care, information communication

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