

ABSTRACT

Young adults' experiences of dialysis and kidney transplant decision-making: social media recruitment of participants.

Background

Social media is increasingly being used for health research recruitment (1,2) as an alternative to traditional recruitment via the National Health Service. It can be used to recruit seldom-heard (hard to reach) groups to research studies (3). However, this method has its own challenges (4), such as a biased sample because individuals are self-screened. This paper examines the use of social media to recruit young adults' (18-30 years) living with end-stage kidney disease (ESKD) to understand their experiences of making a dialysis and kidney transplant choice.

Objective

To explore how far social media was a successful way to recruit young adults with kidney disease to a qualitative research study.

Methods

The study was first advertised to young adults living with ESKD via Twitter and Facebook. The study had its own Twitter handle and a member from our PPI group made a short film to encourage people to contact the researcher. Charities, local groups, and influential young people with kidney disease (well-known on social media) were contacted by email and telephone to explain the study and request dissemination. An examination of each strategy (Twitter and Facebook) method for successful recruitment was undertaken.

Results

39 participants responded to the study invitation, out of which 32 were from Facebook posts, 5 from Twitter posts, and 2 from peers who had already taken part in the study. 18 eligible young adults were recruited and interviewed. 10 participants were above the age range, 3 withdrew due illness and 8 lost following initial contact. Overall it took 10 months to recruit the 18 participants.

Conclusion/Application to practice

Social media can be used to advertise and recruit young people to a research study but requires time and working with influential peers within the young adult population to maintain continuing interest and response to the study invitation.

References

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