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| **Addressing Lupus Disparities through Effective Social Media Engagement** |
| **Problem:** Current research shows that at least 1.5 million Americans have lupus, an autoimmune disease that can damage any part of the body, including skin, joints and organs. Although lupus affects men and children, women of childbearing age are 90% of lupus patients, according to the Lupus Foundation of America. Women of color are 2 to 3 times more likely to have lupus and have worse health outcomes compared to white women. Lupus is a chronic disease that is under discussed. The average diagnosis timeframe is 2 to 6 years. There is a need to increase lupus education and awareness to address lupus health disparities.**Intervention:** The national health education program LEAP: Lupus Education & Awareness Program promotes lupus education messages to patients, health professionals and providers. LEAP implemented a national tradition, digital and social media campaign to increase awareness of lupus through health promotion messages. Through mini-grants, community organizations and health agencies improving the health of African Americans, Hispanics, Chinese and Native Americans communities supported the lupus health promotion media campaign. The campaign objectives were: Integrating lupus messages into National Health Observances; Engaging national health organizations as social media influencers; and Connecting LEAP to existing lupus media communities.**Outcomes:** By using a main hashtag #lupusLEAP, LEAP was able to measure its reach of lupus health promotion messaging. Social media accounts were monitored monthly to determine growth, impressions and engagement by gathering data from Facebook Insights, Twitter Analytics and Hashtracker. LEAP was able to grow its social media platforms from 0 to a Twitter monthly reach of 18,600. Quarterly reach featured: Facebook: 10,889 Impressions; Twitter: 59,024 Impressions; & Instagram: 10,823 Impressions. Ultimately, #lupusLEAP amassed a total of 374,797 impressions.**Implications:** Health education agencies seeking to increase their online presence as well as promote non-traditional chronic diseases, such as lupus, should consider media health promotion strategies that maximize the utilization of National Health Observances, as well as leveraging partnerships. Social media campaigns should be incorporated into the communication plans of health education programs to increase engagement and awareness of health disparities.  |