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| **The effect of adolescents’ use of digital health information on the patient–physician relationship** |
| **Background/Objectives**Digital health information has enhanced health equity and created an informed patient who desires control of their health. Consumer use of digital health information for self-directed, lifelong learning is shifting the patient role in health consultations, altering the patient–physician relationship. We explored the little-reported effect of adolescents’ use of digital health information on the patient–physician relationship, a relationship that impacts the development of health behaviours that endure into adulthood. **Methods**This qualitative study is based on Vygotsky’s Socio-Cultural Theory, focusing on learners’ social interaction with advisors, who build on their knowledge and use tools to help them reach their potential. Semi-structured one-on-one interviews were held with 14 adolescents aged 12–18 with chronic conditions, until data saturation. Theoretical thematic analysis was conducted using open coding and constant comparison to identify key themes. **Results**Themes were: 1) All participants sought information for different purposes from different advisors - most sought advice from parents about general health concerns, many sought advice on lifestyle impacts of their condition from those with the condition (peers, online forums, YouTube, Instagram), all consulted physicians for more specific understanding and all used digital health information for general understanding; 2) Few disclosed digital sources to physicians for fear of communicating incorrect information, despite using sources to gain background knowledge and prepare questions, and many felt ignored by physicians, who mostly spoke to their parents; 3) Most re-accessed digital sources to check physicians’ advice and/or improve understanding; 4) Tools used by adolescents to learn included language and audio-visual media; 5) There is unmet potential for physicians to advise adolescents on trustworthy sources and the digital health information they use. **Discussion**From all sources of health information, adolescents desire learning and shared experience. All view physicians as the most trusted source but barriers hinder communication and learning; most view digital health information as unreliable but still use it. Whether acknowledged or not, digital health information influences the adolescent patient–physician relationship and enables adolescents’ learning in a way that is often not addressed by physicians.**Keywords**health equity, digital health information, adolescent health |