



[What attracts patients with diabetes to an internet support group? A 21-month longitudinal website study.](https://arctichealth.org/en/permalink/ahliterature195377)

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Abstract: To establish and evaluate a web-based educational and emotional resource for patients with diabetes and their family members.

A total of 47 365 user visits over a 21-month period to three internet discussion groups about diabetes were tracked for user activity, characteristics and level of satisfaction.

The primary domains of users were the US (70%) and Canada (4%). Of all users, 7.55% posted messages, while 92.45% read messages posted by others. The average length of use was 15 min 5 s. Forty-four per cent posted messages to the nutrition discussion, 38% posted messages to the motivational discussion, and 18% posted messages to the family discussion. The most common postings addressed nutrition (42%), the emotional impact of diabetes (18%), managing high or low blood glucose levels (10%), and complications (8%). Respondents to the satisfaction survey were 64% female, 43% were insulin and 37% non-insulin users. Eighty-four per cent were older than 30 years, 34% had recently diagnosed diabetes and 32% had diabetes > 10 years. Forty-three per cent visited more than three times. Seventy-nine per cent of all respondents rated participation in the chat as having a positive effect on coping with diabetes.

A professionally moderated internet discussion group is actively visited by a broad base of patients and families, and appears to be a useful strategy for engaging patients with chronic disease for emotional support and information exchange.

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