

Patients being patient with other patients. How Bladder cancer survivors are using chatbots and direct messaging to support newly diagnosed patients.

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Introduction &

Objectives

The diagnosis of aggressive bladder cancer can be daunting for most patients. Some patients explain that they are reminded of their experience daily when they have side effects from a Neobladder or when they change their colostomy bag post-Ileal Conduit. Fortunately, as medicine advances, so does social connectivity worldwide. As social media platforms become more ubiquitous in everyday life, we are seeing more patient-to-patient forums. One such example is The Bladder Cancer Australia Charity platform. A cancer survivor founded it to improve patient experiences by arming future patients with knowledge surrounding the disease. The chatbot is limited to asking visitors if they need help / would like to chat. Once visitors engage, a live chat begins with ex-patients.

This study aims to observe the patient demand for patient-to-patient interactions on the chatbot and patient chat platforms.

Methods

For our methods, we reviewed the chatbot data from the Bladder Cancer Australia Charity Foundation website. The chatbot/chat function went live on the 17th of October 2021 and is still functional today (1/12/21).

Results

In the six weeks of going live, there have been 2903 (non-chat Bot/nil virtual chat) visitors to the site. A total of 46 interactions (1.6%) with the Bot and/or the ex-patient manning the virtual chat platform have been logged. Of those interactions, 15% relate to haematuria, while 3% relate to other matters. Overall, 82% of visitors elect not to reply to our request to engage.

Conclusion

In conclusion, there is a patient demand to speak to other patients and seek additional information. The effort and staffing required to address a patient's concerns are far less than a patient attending a specialist's clinic. We are not suggesting these chat platforms can replace aspects of face-to-face consults. Perhaps more medical professionals should collaborate with patient-led chatbots / patient chat platforms to ensure the most up-to-date resources are posted on their websites and patients' needs are being met.