

The Digital Divide: Examining the Use and Access to E-Health Based Technologies by Millennials and Older Adults

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Abstract : Background and Significance: As the Internet is becoming the epitome of modern communications, there are many pragmatic reasons why the digital divide matters in terms of accessing and using E-health based technologies. With the rise of technology usage globally, those in the older adult generation may not be as familiar and comfortable with technology usage and are thus put at a disadvantage compared to other generations such as millennials when examining and using E-health based platforms and technology. Currently, little is known about how older adults and millennials access and use e-health based technologies. Methods: A systemic review of the literature was undertaken employing the following three databases: (i) PubMed, (ii) ERIC, and (iii) CINAHL; employing the search term 'digital divide and generations' to identify potential articles. To extract required data from the studies, a data abstraction tool was created to obtain the following information: (a) author, (b) year of publication, (c) sample size, (d) country of origin, (e) design/methods, (f) major findings/outcomes obtained. Inclusion criteria included publication dates between the years of Jan 2009 to Aug 2018, written in the English language, target populations of older adults aged 65 and above and millennials, and peer reviewed quantitative studies only. Major Findings: PubMed provided 505 potential articles, where 23 of those articles met the inclusion criteria. Specifically, ERIC provided 53 potential articles, where no articles met criteria following data extraction. CINAHL provided 14 potential articles, where eight articles met criteria following data extraction. Conclusion: Practically speaking, identifying how newer E-health based technologies can be integrated into society and identifying why there is a gap with digital technology will help reduce the impact on generations and individuals who are not as familiar with technology and Internet usage. The largest concern of all is how to prepare older adults for new and emerging E-health technologies. Currently, there is a dearth of literature in this area because it is a newer area of research and little is known about it. The benefits and consequences of technology being integrated into daily living are being investigated as a newer area of research. Several of the articles (N=11) indicated that age is one of the larger factors contributing to the digital divide. Similarly, many of the examined articles (N=5) identify that privacy concerns were one of the main deterrents of technology usage for elderly individuals aged 65 and above. The older adult generation feels that privacy is one of the major concerns, especially in regards to how data is collected, used and possibly sold to third party groups by various websites. Additionally, access to technology, the Internet, and infrastructure also plays a large part in the way that individuals are able to receive and use information. Lastly, a change in the way that healthcare is currently used, received and distributed would also help attribute to the change to ensure that no generation is left behind in a technologically advanced society.

Keywords : digital divide, e-health, millennials, older adults

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