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**505 The Successful Development of a Digital Peer Supporter Training Program - How It is Done.**

Sandra J. Cramolini, MHA, BSN, RN, Jessica Irven, MS, LRT/CTRS, CCLS, CTRP, Pam Peterson, RN, BSN

*Phoenix Society for Burn Survivors, Knoxville, Tennessee; Phoenix Society for Burn Survivors, Durham, North Carolina; Phoenix Society for Burn Survivors, Grand Rapids, Michigan*

**Introduction:** The global pandemic of 2020 and 2021 has had an unforgettable impact on our lives and community well-being. Burn survivors are a particularly vulnerable population for social isolation and loneliness and, therefore, an amplified need for social connection. This abstract outlines the strategic structure, curriculum, and training required to move an in-person course to an innovative digital model.

**Methods:** A group of burn subject matter experts (SMEs), including burn survivors, peer supporters, and course instructors, virtually met to brainstorm program redesign, considering the needs of the burn survivors. Research of topics guided manual and course revisions. Experts recommended a website and digital resource review to streamline organizational data collection and participants' experiences. A scheduled pilot course and evaluation would provide feedback for changes. SMEs created a short turnaround timeline.

**Results:** After research, the revised digital manual was condensed from 200 to 50 pages, allowing for hyperlinks, abbreviated resources, and replicated content removal. Five major content areas previously taught in-person were converted to recorded PowerPoint learning modules (April – June 2020). The asynchronous modules totaled 4 hours of self-paced learning assigned to the candidates before a set virtual course. A survey monkey assessment after each module evaluates the learner's base knowledge. SMEs developed a 4-hour virtual class incorporating the modules, manual, and group exercises. A designed pre-course worksheet prepares the candidates for group exercises. Based on their burn injury type or situation (parent to parent, survivors with amputations, death of loved one), candidates practice virtual peer support visits. After the first pilot course, a comprehensive evaluation tool assessed participant satisfaction and confidence, curriculum, instructor expertise, and comfort level navigating the virtual model (August 2020). A website landing page centralized course resources and content location, streamlining participant experience and organizational data collection (March 2021). A 2-hour instructor course (n=10) provided an update on the new structure. The instructors also observe a virtual peer supporter course, participate as an instructor in-training, then co-teach with another instructor before independent course instruction (June 2021).

**Conclusions:** The digital model has trained burn survivors (n=41) in 6 courses over eight months during a pandemic. Burn survivors have trained together from around the globe to one of the calendared courses improving efficiencies. There are monetary and resource cost savings for burn centers and the organization. The digital manual is easily updated, saving in resource allocation. Peer supporters navigate additional online resources for ongoing self-growth through the embedded website landing page.

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**506 Hidradenitis Suppurativa Reddit Support Group: Finding New Meaning in Social Media during the COVID-19 Pandemic**

Lekha Yesantharao, B.S., Rachana Suresh, M.B.B.S., Carrie A. Cox, MSN, RN, Sheera F. Lerman, PhD, Julie Caffrey, DO, FACOS

*Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, Baltimore, Maryland; Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, Baltimore, Maryland; Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center, Baltimore, Maryland; Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, Baltimore, Maryland; Johns Hopkins, Baltimore, Maryland*

**Introduction:** Hidradenitis suppurativa (HS) is a chronic inflammation of sweat glands that can result in abscesses and scarring, significantly impacting quality of life. Online support groups provide a platform to connect with other HS patients – increasingly important with pandemic-related social isolation. The popular social media site Reddit allows users with common interests, like HS, to form a community and share information. This study characterizes HS patients' use of Reddit and social media more broadly before and during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Methods:** This study consisted of a cross-sectional survey of HS patients treated at our institution between May 2021 and July 2021, collecting data on patient demographics, HS status, and social media support group usage/interest. A longitudinal analysis of use of a popular HS support page on Reddit from January 2019 to August 2021 was also conducted, analyzing the number of subscribers over time.

**Results:** The number of subscribers to the subreddit r/Hidradenitis increased exponentially from January 2019 to August 2021 ( $R^2 = 0.9978$  for exponential model fit to data); this suggests that the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic was associated with a greater increase in the number of subreddit subscribers. Further, 20 patients (90% female, mean age of 32.4 years) completed the survey that was administered. Participants were stratified into two groups: online support group users (n=8) and non-users (n=12). There were no significant differences in sex, age, education level, HS activity, antidepressant usage, and overall social media usage between these groups. However, there was a significant difference in Hurley staging between the two groups; 75% (n=6) of online support group users reported a Hurley III staging, while only 16.7% (n=2) of non-users self-reported as Hurley III ( $p=0.003$ ). In terms of features patients desired to see in online support groups, non-users ranked the following categories of advice/information as important more frequently than current users: bandaging/dressing boils, living with HS, medical advice from professionals, causes of HS, and diet ( $p=0.047$ ,  $p=0.043$ ,  $p=0.043$ ,  $p=0.047$ , and  $p=0.013$ , respectively).

**Conclusions:** This study demonstrates that online support group use is associated with patients with HS of higher clinical severity. Since virtual support groups have an unprecedented importance due to increased social isolation and limited access to in-person support groups and health resources, healthcare providers may encourage non-users to partake in these online support communities during these trying times. Based on the needs and expectations of these patients as identified in this study, recommendations can be made to moderators of online communities to help fill any existing lacunae.