

Dani Hess: Health & Human Development

Mentor: Suzanne Held, Bridget Kevane -- Health & Human Development, Modern Languages & Literatures

The use of social media in promoting Hispanic/Latino health and the implications for a Promotores de Salud program in Gallatin County

The internet has become an important resource for individuals to access health information as well as for healthcare organizations to disseminate information and to connect with patients and the public. Social networking sites (SNS) in particular, such as Facebook and Twitter, have also been used by community health centers, in Community Based Participatory Research contexts, and by Community Health Workers to interact with a diverse range of target populations. Latino and Hispanic populations have been shown to have high participation in SNSs such as Facebook and are likely to be open to using it in health-related contexts. A review of the literature on the use of SNS in Latino and Hispanic health promotion programs was conducted with the intention of informing the use of Facebook in a Promotores de Salud program in Gallatin County, Montana. Findings indicated that the widespread use of Facebook, and the ease with which content can be created by all participants increase the viability of Facebook as a tool for education, outreach and engagement with participants in a Promotores program. Potential disadvantages include a “digital divide” in access to internet and in online literacy that may still leave out the most vulnerable individuals, and federally funded program collaborators that have blocked Facebook on clinic campuses. These findings will help guide the implementation of a Facebook group to help Promotores de Salud share and access educational materials and increase connection with one another and with health professionals in a rural setting such as Montana.