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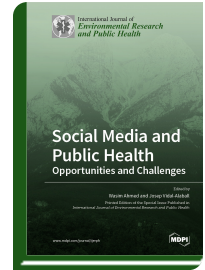
Special Issue Reprint

Social Media and Public Health: Opportunities and Challenges

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Social media has the potential to provide rapid insights into unfolding public health emergencies such as infectious disease outbreaks. They can also be drawn upon for rapid, survey-based insights into various health topics. Social media has also been utilised by medical professionals for the purposes of sharing scholarly works, international collaboration, and engaging in policy debates.

One benefit of using social media platforms to gain insight into health is that they have the ability to capture unfiltered public opinion in large volumes, avoiding the potential biases introduced by surveys or interviews. Social media platforms can also be utilised to pilot surveys, for instance, though the use of Twitter polls. Social media data have also been drawn upon in medical emergencies and crisis situations as a public health surveillance tool. A number of software and online tools also exist, developed specifically to aide public health research utilising social media data. In recent years, ethical issues regarding the retrieval and analysis of data have also arisen.



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