Examining the Influence of Social Media on Decision-Making for Breast Reconstruction Among People of Color

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Background

The rates of postmastectomy breast reconstruction (PMBR) surgery receipt have steadily risen in recent years. Patients preparing to undergo breast reconstruction (BR) have increasingly turned to social media to gather information, share experiences, and seek support1. However, recent studies have reported a lack of inclusion of dark-skinned and nonwhite individuals on plastic surgeons, social media platforms2.

Research Objectives

In this study, we aimed to investigate whether this trend of underrepresentation influenced social media use across race/ethnic groups in a racially diverse group of breast cancer survivors preparing to undergo breast surgery.

Methods

This study included data from a sample of 413 females with a history of surgical intervention for breast cancer obtained from May 2023- June 2023. A racially and ethnically diverse population was sampled, including 250 white, 99 African American, 29 Hispanic, 24 Asian, and 11 American Indian/Alaska Native women. Conducted by Kantar, Lightspeed LLC, the computer-based survey combined a 45-item questionnaire, developed with the BRAVE Coalition, and the 13-item Satisfaction with Breasts subscale of the BREASTQ. It focused on informational sources such as social media and patient-surgeon racial concordance relating these to the decision to undergo BR.

Results

A total of 413 responses were collected. When prompted what factors contributed to their decision to undergo breast cancer surgery, Black and Hispanic respondents answered social media significantly more than White respondents (p<0.001 and p=0.003 respectively). Concerning what information sources were consulted, Black respondents answered social media significantly more compared to White respondents with p=0.011. However, regarding the surgeon-patient racial/ethnic background concordance as a contributing decision factor, there was no significant difference across the race groups (p=0.681).

Limitations

Generalizability: sample diversity may not represent the broader population of breast cancer patients due to the limited sample size

Questionnaire Limitations: several survey questions were dependent on a single best answer rather than select all option which may have inadvertently excluded a subpopulation of respondents who consulted social media

Conclusions

• Analysis revealed that Black and Hispanic patients were 3x more likely to consult social media when deciding whether to undergo BR surgery compared to their White counterparts. Further, Black patients were 2x more likely to use social media for information about breast reconstruction compared to White patients.

• Patient-surgeon race concordance as a factor in BR decision-making across the race groups was not significant.

• As social media use among patients rises, it is imperative that the reasons for its use is understood to ensure equal access to creditable patient aligning information and potentially provide an opportunity for increased outreach and dissemination of knowledge within minority communities.

References
