Proposed Special Issue
Health

Citizens' use of digital media to connect with healthcare: socio-ethical and regulatory implications

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This special issue aims to explore the diverse socio-ethical and regulatory implications of citizens' growing use of digital media to connect to healthcare. It will bring together scholars with expertise in bioethics, sociology, anthropology, medicine and law to consider how digital technologies are shaping citizens' healthcare views and engagements with healthcare and providers' practices, as well as the adequacy of current perspectives and regulatory responses in this sphere. While digitalization of health has been of growing interest to social scientists and bioethicists in recent years, scholarship in this field, especially in regards to citizens' changing views on and connections with healthcare, is nascent. Many of the issues raised by the digitalization of health, especially citizens' use of the internet and social media to gain access to information, treatments and procedures, are novel and to date relatively unexplored. The rapid convergence of technologies and growing use of mobile devices is rapidly changing the character of healthcare, including citizens' connections to the institutions of healthcare and their expectations about treatments and care. There is an urgent need to better understand the diverse impacts of digitalization so that the benefits of new technologies can be exploited while the harms are minimized or ameliorated.

The digitalization of health and healthcare is giving rise to a novel array of social, ethical and regulatory issues that have barely begun to be explored. These include: the impacts of the routine use of digital technologies on citizens' beliefs and expectations about health and care; the potential exploitation of those who invest their trust in remote others; the ability of lay citizens to assess the veracity of information derived via the web and social media; how relations of trust are being reconfigured in an online environment; and the effectiveness of authorities' current approaches to regulating treatments and practices that are advertised directly to consumers via the internet. The impacts of the digitalization of health are complex and ambiguous, and cannot be adequately grasped from the standpoint of single disciplines.

Articles may explore such topics as:
- How is search optimization shaping the delivery of online health and medical information?
- How is patient activism influencing the development of health research agendas (e.g. 'patient-driven' research) and what are the implications?
- How is new digital media introduced, legitimated and being used in different health and medical contexts, and to what effects?
- What challenges do citizens face when assessing the 'trustworthiness' of online information, including online 'direct-to-consumer' advertising?
- What new types of citizenship and new engagements with data, bodies and biomedical knowledge are emerging through new data practices?
- What are the implications of the growing commodification of the body and of health associated with citizen's growing access to health services, technologies and treatments (e.g. stem cell treatments, transplant surgery, fertility treatment and surrogacy)?
- What are the implications of new instruments and techniques offered to citizens via digital media to monitor and improve their health (ie. risk calculators, wearables, tele-health services)?
- How adequate are current systems of accreditation and regulation given rapid changes arising from the digitalization of health and healthcare?
- What are the strengths and weakness of current regulatory responses in addressing health, safety and ethical issues associated with digital innovations in health and healthcare?

- What are the politics and policies governing the collection, use and accessibility of 'big data' associated with digitalized healthcare?

The deadline for submissions is 30 November 2017, and authors should submit online at https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/health. When asked to choose article type, authors should stipulate 'Special Issue: 'Citizens use of digital media to connect with healthcare'. All submissions should meet *Health* author guidelines (see https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/journal/health#submission-guidelines).

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