The Effect of Social Networking on the Mental State of Senior Citizens

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Geriatric, or late life depression is becoming an increasingly frequent problem amongst the senior citizens of our society. Many types of therapy have been tried in order to decrease the problem, however, one method that has not yet been tested is the usage of social networking websites (Facebook, Myspace, Twitter, etc.). This investigation sought to discover if there is an existing correlation between a given senior citizen's social networking activity and their profile of depression. A 68-question containing various scales of depression (such as the Geriatric Rating Scale for Depression) and a social networking scale was distributed to senior citizens. Some of these senior citizens resided in a local assisted living center, and some resided in various communities that are not exclusive to the elderly. The seniors completed these surveys, and the results were analyzed. The results yielded that a correlation does indeed exist. The higher a person scored on the scale for depression, the lower they scored on the social networking scale. Secondly, a curriculum was designed in order to teach the elderly how to use social networking sites. The seniors completed the survey upon the beginning and completion of the curriculum to determine the difference in their mental states. These results yielded that the senior citizens showed a significant decrease in depression, and a significant increase on the social networking scale, showing that social networking can be used as a treatment for geriatric depression.

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