**Actor Network Theory, Irrational Health Beliefs, & Health Myths: Dead-Wrong Assumptions in the Diabetes Network**

**Background**

- Irrational health beliefs (IHBs) refer to the illogical opinions, attitudes and thoughts about health that lack empirical support and pragmatism.
- IHBs and health myths may impede an individual's ability to seek health information, seek medical care, adhere to medical treatments or even make reasonable health-care decisions.

**Diabetes**

- Diabetes is a chronic condition characterized by the body's inability to properly control blood sugar levels.
- Minorities are more prone to developing diabetes.
- Hispanics have the highest prevalence of diabetes.

**Theory**

- **Activity Theory** is generally concerned with culturally mediated and socially situated activities. Look at the big picture and explain why.
- **Actor Network Theory** is concerned with the interaction between actors and the networks and helps explain the moment-by-moment translations and mechanisms of persuasion. It helps answer how.

**Research Questions**

This research project was specifically designed to explore the health belief ‘diabetes is curable.’

- RQ1: How is information about the curability of diabetes spread?
- RQ2: What are the main intermediaries and mediators in the process?

**Methods**

- Identified and categorized existing networks: family, social, health care, media outlets, commercial, as well as, online blogs, forums and diabetes related webpages.
- Conducted a Google search using the term diabetes is curable. Used the URLs from the search results to determine the source of the information (social webpage, health webpage, media webpage, etc.). Each URL was individually assessed, and pertinent information was extracted from each page.

**Findings**

- **Data Collection and Analysis**
  - Grounded Theory & Content Analysis
  - Made Connections
  - Conceptualized Categorized

- **Data Dissemination**
  - Diabetic Patient Information
  - Media Information
  - Online Information

**Discussion**

RQ1: How is information about the curability of diabetes spread?

**Actor Network Theory/WHY**

- Problematic: Individuals find diabetes a major problem and search for information and assistance.
- Interessement: The individual desires to believe that there is a cure which may cause a person to be influenced by other agents and their beliefs — may ignore the rational options.

**RQ2: What?**

- **Intermediaries**: Individuals with low health literacy, no power, cannot influence the claim, cannot be ignored.
- **Mediators**: Bloggers, businesses, organizations, participants who reject the claim, anyone who has the power to spread or stop the spread of the IHB.

**Activity Theory/WHY**

- **Subjects**: Low-health literacy, little ability to understand the outcomes, individuals who are not thinking about how their actions affect others.
- **Labor Division**: Individuals of low SES, generally less educated and more vulnerable to claims, lack scientific understanding, the educated take advantage.
- **Roles**: Generally individuals are not going to make claims that will hurt others. Rule is not followed online.
- **Community**: Social context is different for the Hispanic community. Hispanic participants are more willing to try alternative medicines. They want to believe in the claim.
- **Mediation**: Online information is mediated through the existing networks. These networks may become significant for individuals who need family or peer support for gathering and applying information.

**Conclusion**

- **Interventions**
  - Political/Legal: Develop global and national policies that address the problem and are targeted to the business/organization and healthcare networks.
  - Media: Health care professionals must develop cultural competence to better disseminate information to their patients.
- **Socio-Cultural**: People with diabetes rely on social networks for disease management.

**References**